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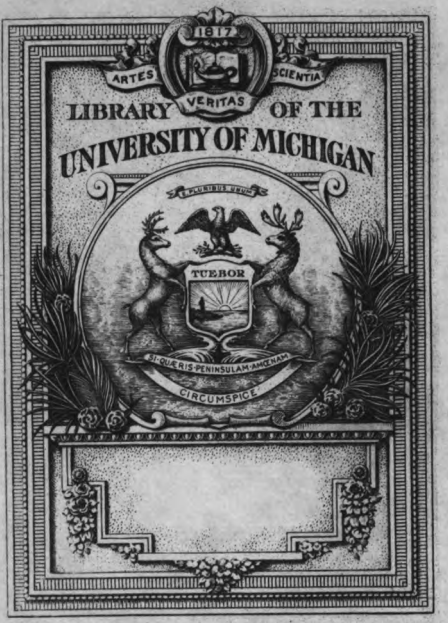

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Riverside Pocket Edition

THE POETIC AND DRAMATIC WORKS OF ROBERT BROWNING

IN SIX VOLUMES

VOLUME VI

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THE WORKS OF ROBERT BROWNING

VI

THE AGAMEMNON OF ÆSCHYLUS
LA SAISIAZ: THE TWO POETS OF CROISIC
DRAMATIC IDYLS: JOCOSERIA
FERISHTAH'S FANCIES: PARLEYINGS
ASOLANDO: UNCOLLECTED POEMS

BOSTON AND NEW YORK
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INTRODUCTION.

WE have now reached the period of Browning's old age, and of the final expression of his poetical gifts. For the most part, this volume shows a return to his lyrical mood, and he is less didactic and philosophical than in his earliest poems or in those of his middle age. His later poems as a whole do not keep quite to the level of his *Dramatic Romances* and *Men and Women*, but in single instances, at least, they reach the same height.

The translation of the *Agamemnon* of Æschylus was published in 1877, and followed along the same general lines as the previous treatment of Euripides, being very rugged and literal. Professor J. P. Mahaffy said that the translator "has given us an over-faithful version from his matchless hand, — matchless in conveying the spirit of the Greek poets. But in this instance he has outdone his original in ruggedness, owing to his excess of conscience as a translator." AGAMEMNON.

Among Browning's earliest friends was Miss Anne Edgerton-Smith, proprietor of the Liverpool *Mercury*, whom he first met when she was a young woman, in Florence, and with whom he became intimately acquainted in after years in London. They were both devoted lovers of music, and frequently attended concerts together. They spent the summer of 1877 in the Savoyard Mountains of Switzerland, near Geneva, at a villa called "La Saisiaz." "How lovely is this place in its solitude and seclusion," Browning wrote, "with its trees and shrubs, and flowers, and, above all, its live mountain stream, which supplies three fountains and two delightful baths, a marvel of delicate delight framed in with trees, — I bathe there twice a day, — and then what wonderful views from the chalet on every side! Geneva lying under us, with the lake and the LA SAISIAZ.

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whole plain bounded by the Jura and our own Salève, which latter seems rather close behind our house, and yet takes a hard hour and a half to ascend, — all this you can imagine, since you know the environs of the town: the peace and the quiet move me the most."

Into the midst of this peace and quiet came the sudden death of Miss Edgerton-Smith, as she was preparing with the other guests to climb the mountain, September 14. This event gave Browning a severe shock, and the train of thought awakened was worked out into the poem which was written during the next two months. In it he restated his faith in God and immortality, basing his argument on the uncertainty in regard to the future for the supreme worth of the present life as the time for probation and training. The incident at La Saisiaz, however, only gave crisis to Browning's thinking; for the germ of the poem was a letter written him in 1876 by a correspondent who thanked him for the hope and cheer of his poems, especially *Rabbi ben Ezra* and *Abt Vogler*, which had enabled her to keep her religious faith, and to hold steadily to her trust in immortality. The following letter in reply will be found the best possible commentary on the poem: —

"It would ill become me to waste a word on my own feelings, except inasmuch as they can be common to us both in such situation as you describe yours to be, and which, by sympathy, I can make mine by the anticipation of a few years at most. It is a great thing — the greatest — that a human being should have passed the probation of life, and sum up its experience in a witness to the power and love of God. I dare congratulate you. All the help I can offer, in my poor degree, is the assurance that I see ever more reason to hold by the same hope, and that by no means in ignorance of what has been advanced to the contrary; and for your sake I would wish it to be true that I had so much of 'genius' as to permit the testimony of an especially privileged insight to come in aid of the ordinary argument. For I know I myself have been aware of the communication of something more subtle than a ratiocinative process, when the convictions of 'genius' have thrilled my soul to its depth, as when Napoleon, shutting up the New Testament, said

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of Christ, 'Do you know that I am an understander of men? Well, he was no man!' (Savez-vous que je me connais en hommes? Eh bien, celui-là ne fut pas un homme.) Or as when Charles Lamb, in a gay fancy with some friends as to how he and they would feel if the greatest of the dead were to appear suddenly in flesh and blood once more, on the final suggestion, 'And if Christ entered this room?' changed his manner at once, and stuttered out, — as his manner was when moved, — 'You see, if Shakespeare entered we should all rise; if *He* appeared, we must kneel.' Or, not to multiply instances, as when Dante wrote what I will transcribe from my wife's Testament, wherein I recorded it fourteen years ago: 'Thus I believe, thus I affirm, thus I am certain it is, that from this life I shall pass to another better, there, where that lady lives of whom my soul was enamored.'"

THE TWO POETS OF CROISIC.

In 1866 Browning spent his summer vacation at Le Croisic, a little seaside town on the peninsula at the southeast corner of Brittany. In one of his letters written there he described his surroundings: "We are in the most delicious and peculiar old house I ever occupied, the oldest in the town, — plenty of great rooms, — nearly as much space as in Villa Alberti. The little town and surrounding country are wild and primitive, even a trifle beyond Pornic, perhaps. Close by is Batz, a village where the men dress in white from head to foot, with baggy breeches and great black flap hats; opposite is Guérande, the old capital of Bretagne, and other interesting places are near. The sea is all round our peninsula, and on the whole I expect we shall like it very much." After leaving the place he wrote: "We enjoyed Croisic increasingly to the last." During his stay in the town he inquired into its history, and sought out a knowledge of its antiquities, its legends and traditions. When again spending a vacation there, in September, 1868, he began the writing of the poem in which he made use of his researches into the literary history of the place. The poem was not published until 1878, when it appeared in one volume with *La Saisiaz*.

The first series of *Dramatic Idyls* was begun in 1878; and, while spending the vacation of that year in a comfortable hotel

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in the Splügen Pass, he was busily engaged upon them. The mountain air stimulated his productive powers, and he worked with such rapidity that his sister refused to remain in so exciting an atmosphere. They went on to Asolo and Venice, where the series was completed; and it was published in 1879. Mrs. Orr says the volume "sent a thrill of surprised admiration through the public mind," doubtless because of its lyrical power, and its keen insight into various phases of human experience. The second series was produced at the same rapid pace, and was published in 1880. These lyrical poems were based on incident, legend, or myth with which the poet had become acquainted in his extensive reading. Some of these came to his knowledge in youth or early manhood, and were now for the first time used, as in the case of *Ned Bratts*, *Pietro of Abano*, and others.

DRAMATIC IDYLS.

A lighter and more humorous vein appeared in the poems written during 1881 and 1882, which was indicated by the title given the volume in which they were published, during the spring of 1883. The title of this volume is mentioned in a foot-note to the *Note* at the end of *Paracelsus*, where the poet speaks of "such rubbish as Melander's *Jocoseria*." In a letter, accompanying a copy of the volume, sent to a friend, Browning wrote: "The title is taken from the work of Melander (Schwartzmann), reviewed, by a curious coincidence, in the *Blackwood* of this month [February, 1883]. I referred to it in a note to *Paracelsus*. The two Hebrew quotations (put in to give a grave look to what is mere fun and invention), being translated, amount to (1) 'A Collection of Lies' [p. 233]; and (2), an old saying, 'From Moses to Moses arose none like Moses' [p. 234]." Otho Schwartzmann (Græcised into Melander, according to the fashion of the age) was born in 1571, and died in 1640. He was the son of a Lutheran clergyman, graduated at Marbourg, and became a lawyer. In 1594 he published *Centuria Controversarum juris feudalis*, and in 1599 *Exegesis totius Studii Politici*. His *Jocoseria* was a collection of stories both grave and gay. He drew from many sources, ancient and modern, and from all countries. He had read much, and into his book he put all the good stories and

JOCOSERIA.

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anecdotes he could find. In telling some of these stories he was very grave; in others he tried to be very jocose and amusing, which accounts for his title. Melander also illustrated clerical life, the follies of women, the peculiarities of various professions, told old stories and jests in a new form, and had many anecdotes of witchcraft.

In his next volume, *Ferishtah's Fancies*, published in 1884, Browning returned to his more speculative mood, though in some of his poems, and especially in the shorter lyrics, he showed much of his old gift for rapid lyrical expression. This volume was suggested by a fable of Pilpay, or Bidpai, which was read by him when a boy. This he versified, and the thought came to him to follow it with other poems in the same style to form a series. The poems that succeeded were produced under the influence of three Oriental books, the *Fables of Bidpai*, Firdusi's *Shah Nameh*, and *Job*.

FERISHTAH'S FANCIES.

Had Browning continued this series of poems as he began it, the resemblance to the *Fables of Bidpai* in outward form would have been very close. However, after the first poem, he dropped the element of fable and made his poems a series of philosophical discussions; and yet enough of the story element remains to bring Bidpai distinctly to mind. Ferishtah very much resembles Bidpai the philosopher, as he appears in the *Fables*. His character as a sage, and his manner of teaching, are quite similar.

Another feature of the book is that obtained from Firdusi's great epic poem of Persia, the *Shah Nameh*. The name Ferishtah is evidently itself Persian, and, though it does not appear in the *Shah Nameh*, yet Ferishtah is the name of a Persian historian of the eighteenth century. No part of the machinery of *Ferishtah's Fancies* is taken from Firdusi, nor has Browning made use of any of the legends of the Persian epic. Yet it has frequent reference to the fabulous heroes, characters, and incidents in Firdusi.

Another element in *Ferishtah's Fancies* is that taken from the book of Job, though it does not equal that from the *Fables of Bidpai* or the *Shah Nameh*. Browning had evidently given some attention to the critical discussion of the origin of the book

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of Job, for he suggests that it is a Persian book. Scholars have often been of the opinion that Job is not distinctly Hebrew, but Arabic or Syriac in origin, and in some of the characteristics of its teachings. Some of the teachings indicate that the author may have come in contact with the religion of Zoroaster; for while Job is a stern monotheist, he believes that God is opposed by an intriguing Adversary.

In a letter to a friend, written soon after this series of poems was published, Browning said: "I hope and believe that one or two careful readings of the Poem will make its sense clear enough. Above all, pray allow for the Poet's inventiveness in any case, and do not suppose there is more than a thin disguise of a few Persian names and allusions. There was no such person as Ferishtah, — the stories are all inventions. . . . The Hebrew quotations are put in for a purpose, as a direct acknowledgment that certain doctrines may be found in the Old Book, which the Concoctors of Novel Schemes of Morality put forth as discoveries of their own." The mottoes indicate the humorous and fictitiously Oriental manner of the poem.

Various indications had begun to appear in Browning's poems of his growing age, and of his return to the tastes and interests of earlier years. His next volume, *Parleyings*, published in 1887, was nearer of kin to *Pauline* and *Paracelsus* than any of his intervening work, not only in literary style, but in the use of materials that carried him back to the studies of his early manhood. Of this tendency Mrs. Orr says: "Their author is still the same Robert Browning, though here and there visibly touched by the hand of time. Passages of sweet and majestic music, of exquisite fancy, alternate with its long stretches of argumentative thought; and the light of imagination still plays, however fitfully, over statements of opinion to which constant repetition has given a suggestion of commonplace. But the revision of the work caused him unusual trouble. The subjects he had chosen strained his powers of exposition; and I think he often tried to remedy by mere verbal correction what was a defect in the logical arrangement of his ideas. They would slide into each other where a visible dividing line was required. The last stage of his life was now at hand; and

PARLEYINGS.

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the vivid return of fancy to his boyhood's literary loves was in pathetic, perhaps not quite accidental, coincidence with the fact."

Browning's last volume, *Asolando*, appeared on the very day of his death. The first poem in it, *Rosny*, was written in London, in December, 1887, and several of the others came from his pen during that winter, while *White Witchcraft* was suggested during the previous summer by the letter of a friend. During the winter of 1888–89 the volume was completed. Two or three of its poems, at least, had all the fire and lyrical power of his best work, and the one with which it concludes stands unsurpassed in its courage of spiritual conviction. One evening, when he was revising the proof-sheets of the book, he read this last poem to his sister and daughter-in-law, and then said to them: "It almost looks like bragging to say this, and as if I ought to cancel it; but it 's the simple truth, and as it 's true it shall stand." Just before his death, Browning learned from his son of the interest taken in his book, and of its assured success. It came to many of his readers as a word of hail and farewell from that spiritual teacher who had, more effectually than any one else, shown them how to meet life with courage and hope.

ASOLANDO.

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THE AGAMEMNON OF ÆSCHYLUS

MAY I be permitted to chat a little, by way of recreation, at the end of a somewhat toilsome and perhaps fruitless adventure?

If, because of the immense fame of the following Tragedy, I wished to acquaint myself with it, and could only do so by the help of a translator, I should require him to be literal at every cost save that of absolute violence to our language. The use of certain allowable constructions which, happening to be out of daily favor, are all the more appropriate to archaic workmanship, is no violence: but I would be tolerant for once — in the case of so immensely famous an original — of even a clumsy attempt to furnish me with the very turn of each phrase in as Greek a fashion as English will bear: while, with respect to amplifications and embellishments, — anything rather than, with the good farmer, experience that most signal of mortifications, "to gape for Æschylus and get Theognis." I should especially decline — what may appear to brighten up a passage — the employment of a new word for some old one, — πόνος, or μέγας, or τέλος, with its congeners, recurring four times in three lines: for though such substitution may be in itself perfectly justifiable, yet this exercise of ingenuity ought to be within the competence of the unaided English reader if he likes to show himself ingenious. Learning Greek teaches Greek, and nothing else: certainly not common sense, if that have failed to precede the teaching. Further, — if I obtained a mere strict bald version of thing by thing, or at least word pregnant with thing, I should hardly look for an impossible transmission of the reputed magniloquence and sonority of the Greek; and this with the less regret, inasmuch as there is abundant musicality elsewhere, but nowhere else than in his poem the ideas of the poet. And lastly, when presented with these ideas, I should expect the result to prove very hard reading indeed if it were meant to resemble Æschylus, ξυμβαλεῖν οὐ ῥᾴδιος, "not easy to understand," in the opinion of his stoutest advocate among the ancients; while, I suppose, even modern scholarship sympathizes with that early declaration of the redoubtable Salmasius, when, looking about for an example of the truly obscure for the benefit of those who found

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obscurity in the sacred books, he protested that this particular play leaves them all behind in this respect, with their "Hebraisms, Syriasms, Hellenisms, and the whole of such bag and baggage."* For, over and above the purposed ambiguity of the Chorus, the text is sadly corrupt, probably interpolated, and certainly mutilated; and no unlearned person enjoys the scholar's privilege of trying his fancy upon each obstacle whenever he comes to a stoppage, and effectually clearing the way by suppressing what seems to lie in it.

All I can say for the present performance is, that I have done as I would be done by, if need were. Should anybody, without need, honor my translation by a comparison with the original, I beg him to observe that, following no editor exclusively, I keep to the earlier readings so long as sense can be made out of them, but disregard, I hope, little of importance in recent criticism so far as I have fallen in with it. Fortunately, the poorest translation, provided only it be faithful, — though it reproduce all the artistic confusion of tenses, moods, and persons, with which the original teems, — will not only suffice to display what an eloquent friend maintains to be the all-in-all of poetry — "the action of the piece" — but may help to illustrate his assurance that "the Greeks are the highest models of expression, the unapproached masters of the grand style: their expression is so excellent because it is so admirably kept in its right degree of prominence, because it is so simple and so well subordinated, because it draws its force directly from the pregnancy of the matter which it conveys . . . not a word wasted, not a sentiment capriciously thrown in, stroke on stroke!"† So may all happen!

Just a word more on the subject of my spelling — in a transcript from the Greek and there exclusively — Greek names and places precisely as does the Greek author. I began this practice, with great innocency of intention, some six-and-thirty years ago. Leigh Hunt, I remember, was accustomed to speak of his gratitude, when ignorant of Greek, to those writers (like Goldsmith) who had obliged him by using English characters, so that he might relish, for instance, the smooth quality of such a phrase as "hapalunetai galené;" he said also that Shelley was indignant at "Firenze" having displaced the Dantesque "Fiorenza," and would contemptuously English the intruder

* "Quis Æschylum possit affirmare Græce nunc scienti magis patere explicabilem quam Evangelia aut Epistolas Apostolicas? Unus ejus Agamemnon obscuritate superat quantum est librorum sacrorum cum suis Hebraismis et Syriasmis et tota Hellenisticæ suppellectili vel farragine. — SALMASIUS *de Hellenistica*, Epist. Dedic.

† Poems by Matthew Arnold, Preface.

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"Firence." I supposed I was doing a simple thing enough: but there has been lately much astonishment at *os* and *us*, *ai* and *oi*, representing the same letters in Greek. Of a sudden, however, whether in translation or out of it, everybody seems committing the offence, although the adoption of *u* for *v* still presents such difficulty that it is a wonder how we have hitherto escaped "Eyripides." But there existed a sturdy Briton who, Ben Jonson informs us, wrote "The Life of the Emperor Anthony Pie" — whom we now acquiesce in as Antoninus Pius: for "with time and patience the mulberry leaf becomes satin." Yet there is on all sides much profession of respect for what Keats called "vowelled Greek" — "consonanted," one would expect; and, in a criticism upon a late admirable translation of something of my own, it was deplored that, in a certain verse corresponding in measure to the fourteenth of the sixth Pythian Ode, "neither Professor Jebb in his Greek, nor Mr. Browning in his English, could emulate that matchlessly musical γόνον ἰδὼν κάλλιστον ἀνδρῶν." Now, undoubtedly, "Seeing her son the fairest of men" has more sense than sound to boast of: but then, would not an Italian roll us out "Rimirando il figliuolo bellissimo degli uomini?" whereat Pindar, no less than Professor Jebb and Mr. Browning, τριακτῆρος οἴχεται τυχών.

It is recorded in the Annals of Art* that there was once upon a time, practising so far north as Stockholm, a painter and picture-cleaner — sire of a less unhappy son — Old Muytens: and the annalist, Baron de Tessé, has not concealed his profound dissatisfaction at Old Muytens' conceit "to have himself had something to do with the work of whatever master of eminence might pass through his hands." Whence it was — the Baron goes on to deplore — that much detriment was done to that excellent piece "The Recognition of Achilles," by Rubens, through the perversity of Old Muytens, "who must needs take on him to beautify every nymph of the twenty by the bestowment of a widened eye and an enlarged mouth." I, at least, have left eyes and mouths everywhere as I found them, and this conservatism is all that claims praise for — what is, after all, ἀκέλευστος ἄμισθος ἀοιδά. No, neither "uncommanded" nor "unrewarded:" since it was commanded of me by my venerated friend Thomas Carlyle, and rewarded will it indeed become, if I am permitted to dignify it by the prefatory insertion of his dear and noble name.

R. B.

LONDON, *October* 1, 1877.

* Lettres à un jeune Prince, traduites du Suédois.

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AGAMEMNON

PERSONS OF THE DRAMA.

WARDER.	AGAMEMNON.
CHOROS OF OLD MEN.	AIGISTHOS.
KLUTAIMNESTRA.	KASSANDRA.
TALTHUBIOS, *Herald.*	

WARDER.

THE gods I ask deliverance from these labors,
Watch of a year's length whereby, slumbering through it
On the Atreidai's roofs on elbow, — dog-like —
I know of nightly star-groups the assemblage,
And those that bring to men winter and summer,
Bright dynasts, as they pride them in the æther
— Stars, when they wither, and the uprisings of them.
And now on ward I wait the torch's token,
The glow of fire, shall bring from Troia message
And word of capture: so prevails audacious
The man's-way-planning hoping heart of woman.
But when I, driven from night-rest, dew-drenched, hold to
This couch of mine — not looked upon by visions,
Since fear instead of sleep still stands beside me,
So as that fast I fix in sleep no eyelids —
And when to sing or chirp a tune I fancy,
For slumber such song-remedy infusing,
I wail then, for this House's fortune groaning,
Not, as of old, after the best ways governed.
Now, lucky be deliverance from these labors,
At good news — the appearing dusky fire!
O hail, thou lamp of night, a day-long lightness
Revealing, and of dances the ordainment!
Halloo, halloo!
To Agamemnon's wife I show, by shouting,
That, from bed starting up at once, i' the household
Joyous acclaim, good-omened to this torch-blaze,
She send aloft, if haply Ilion's city
Be taken, as the beacon boasts announcing.
Ay, and, for me, myself will dance a prelude,

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For, that my masters' dice drop right, I 'll reckon:
Since thrice-six has it thrown to me, this signal.
Well, may it hap that, as he comes, the loved hand
O' the household's lord I may sustain with this hand!
As for the rest, I 'm mute: on tongue a big ox
Has trodden. Yet this House, if voice it take should,
Most plain would speak. So, willing I myself speak
To those who know: to who know not — I 'm blankness.

CHOROS.

The tenth year this, since Priamos' great match,
King Menelaos, Agamemnon King,
— The strenuous yoke-pair of the Atreidai's honor
Two-throned, two-sceptred, whereof Zeus was donor —
Did from this land the aid, the armament dispatch,
The thousand-sailored force of Argives clamoring
"Ares" from out the indignant breast, as fling
Passion forth vultures which, because of grief
Away, — as are their young ones, — with the thief,
Lofty above their brood-nests wheel in ring,
Row round and round with oar of either wing,
Lament the bedded chicks, lost labor that was love:
Which hearing, one above
— Whether Apollon, Pan or Zeus — that wail,
Sharp-piercing bird-shriek of the guests who fare
Housemates with gods in air —
Such-an-one sends, against who these assail,
What, late-sent, shall not fail
Of punishing — Erinus. Here as there,
The Guardian of the Guest, Zeus, the excelling one,
Sends against Alexandros either son
Of Atreus: for that wife, the many-husbanded,
Appointing many a tug that tries the limb,
While the knee plays the prop in dust, while, shred
To morsels, lies the spear-shaft; in those grim
Marriage-prolusions when their Fury wed
Danaoi and Troes, both alike. All 's said:
Things are where things are, and, as fate has willed,
So shall they be fulfilled.
Not gently-grieving, not just doling out
The drops of expiation — no, nor tears distilled —
Shall he we know of bring the hard about
To soft — that intense ire
At those mock rites unsanctified by fire.
But we pay nought here: through our flesh, age-weighed,
Left out from who gave aid

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In that day, — we remain,
Staying on staves a strength
The equal of a child's at length.
For when young marrow in the breast doth reign,
That 's the old man's match, — Ares out of place
In either: but in oldest age's case,
Foliage a-fading, why, he wends his way
On three feet, and, no stronger than a child,
Wanders about gone wild,
A dream in day.
But thou, Tundareus' daughter, Klutaimnestra queen,
What need? What new? What having heard or seen,
By what announcement's tidings, everywhere
Settest thou, round about, the sacrifice aflare?
For, of all gods the city-swaying,
Those supernal, those infernal,
Those of the fields', those of the mart's obeying, —
The altars blaze with gifts;
And here and there, heaven-high the torch uplifts
Flame — medicated with persuasions mild,
With foul admixture unbeguiled —
Of holy unguent, from the clotted chrism
Brought from the palace, safe in its abysm.
Of these things, speaking what may be indeed
Both possible and lawful to concede,
Healer do thou become! — of this solicitude
Which, now, stands plainly forth of evil mood,
And, then . . . but from oblations, hope, to-day
Gracious appearing, wards away
From soul the insatiate care,
The sorrow at my breast, devouring there!

Empowered am I to sing
The omens, what their force which, journeying,
Rejoiced the potentates:
(For still, from God, inflates
My breast, song-suasion: age,
Born to the business, still such war can wage)
— How the fierce bird against the Teukris land
Dispatched, with spear and executing hand,
The Achaian's two-throned empery — o'er Hellas' youth
Two rulers with one mind:
The birds' king to these kings of ships, on high,
— The black sort, and the sort that 's white behind, —
Appearing by the palace, on the spear-throw side,
In right sky-regions, visible far and wide, —

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Devouring a hare-creature, great with young,
Balked of more racings they, as she from whom they sprung!
Ah, Linos, say — ah, Linos, song of wail!
But may the good prevail!

The prudent army-prophet seeing two
The Atreidai, two their tempers, knew
Those feasting on the hare
The armament-conductors were;
And thus he spoke, explaining signs in view.
"In time, this outset takes the town of Priamos:
But all before its towers, — the people's wealth that was,
Of flocks and herds, — as sure, shall booty-sharing thence
Drain to the dregs away, by battle violence.
Only, have care lest grudge of any god disturb
With cloud the unsullied shine of that great force, the curb
Of Troia, struck with damp
Beforehand in the camp!
For envyingly is
The virgin Artemis
Toward — her father's flying hounds — this House —
The sacrificers of the piteous
And cowering beast,
Brood and all, ere the birth: she hates the eagles' feast.
Ah, Linos, say — ah, Linos, song of wail!
But may the good prevail!

Thus ready is the beauteous one with help
To those small dewdrop things fierce lions whelp,
And udder-loving litter of each brute
That roams the mead; and therefore makes she suit,
The fair one, for fulfilment to the end
Of things these signs portend —
Which partly smile, indeed, but partly scowl —
The phantasms of the fowl.
I call Ieïos Paian to avert
She work the Danaoi hurt
By any thwarting waftures, long and fast
Holdings from sail of ships:
And sacrifice, another than the last,
She for herself precipitate —
Something unlawful, feast for no man's lips,
Builder of quarrels, with the House cognate —
Having in awe no husband: for remains
A frightful, backward-darting in the path,
Wily house-keeping chronicler of wrath,

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That has to punish that old children's fate!"
Such things did Kalchas, — with abundant gains
As well, — vociferate,
Predictions from the birds, in journeying,
Above the abode of either king.
With these, symphonious, sing —
Ah, Linos, say — ah, Linos, song of wail!
But may the good prevail!

Zeus, whosoe'er he be, — if that express
Aught dear to him on whom I call —
So do I him address.
I cannot liken out, by all
Admeasurement of powers,
Any but Zeus for refuge at such hours,
If veritably needs I must
From off my soul its vague care-burden thrust.

Not — whosoever was the great of yore,
Bursting to bloom with bravery all round —
Is in our mouths: he was, but is no more.
And who it was that after came to be,
Met the thrice-throwing wrestler, — he
Is also gone to ground.
But "Zeus" — if any, heart and soul, that name —
Shouting the triumph-praise — proclaim,
Complete in judgment shall that man be found.
Zeus, who leads onward mortals to be wise,
Appoints that suffering masterfully teach.
In sleep, before the heart of each,
A woe-remembering travail sheds in dew
Discretion, — ay, and melts the unwilling too
By what, perchance, may be a graciousness
Of gods, enforced no less, —
As they, commanders of the crew,
Assume the awful seat.

And then the old leader of the Achaian fleet,
Disparaging no seer —
With bated breath to suit misfortune's inrush here
— (What time it labored, that Achaian host,
By stay from sailing, — every pulse at length
Emptied of vital strength, —
Hard over Kalchis shore-bound, current-crost
In Aulis station, — while the winds which post
From Strumon, ill-delayers, famine-fraught,

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Tempters of man to sail where harborage is naught,
Spendthrifts of ships and cables, turning time
To twice the length, — these carded, by delay,
To less and less away
The Argeians' flowery prime:
And when a remedy more grave and grand
Than aught before — yea, for the storm and dearth —
The prophet to the foremost in command
Shrieked forth, as cause of this
Adducing Artemis,
So that the Atreidai-striking staves on earth
Could not withhold the tear) —
Then did the king, the elder, speak this clear.

"Heavy the fate, indeed — to disobey!
Yet heavy if my child I slay,
The adornment of my household: with the tide
Of virgin-slaughter, at the altar-side,
A father's hands defiling: which the way
Without its evils, say?
How shall I turn fleet-fugitive,
Failing of duty to allies?
Since for a wind-abating sacrifice
And virgin blood, — 't is right they strive,
Nay, madden with desire.
Well may it work them — this that they require!"

But when he underwent necessity's
Yoke-trace, — from soul blowing unhallowed change
Unclean, abominable, — thence — another man —
The audacious mind of him began
Its wildest range.
For this it is gives mortals hardihood —
Some vice-devising miserable mood
Of madness, and first woe of all the brood.
The sacrificer of his daughter — strange! —
He dared become, to expedite
Woman-avenging warfare, — anchors weighed
With such prelusive rite!

Prayings and callings "Father" — naught they made
Of these, and of the virgin-age, —
Captains heart-set on war to wage!
His ministrants, vows done, the father bade —
Kid-like, above the altar, swathed in pall,
Take her — lift high, and have no fear at all,

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Head-downward, and the fair mouth's guard
And frontage hold, — press hard
From utterance a curse against the House
By dint of bit — violence bridling speech.
And as to ground her saffron-vest she shed,
She smote the sacrificers all and each
With arrow sweet and piteous,
From the eye only sped, —
Significant of will to use a word,
Just as in pictures: since, full many a time,
In her sire's guest-hall, by the well-heaped board
Had she made music, — lovingly with chime
Of her chaste voice, that unpolluted thing,
Honored the third libation, — paian that should bring
Good fortune to the sire she loved so well.

What followed — those things I nor saw nor tell.
But Kalchas' arts — whate'er they indicate —
Miss of fulfilment never: it is fate.
True, justice makes, in sufferers, a desire
To know the future woe preponderate.
But — hear before is need!
To that, farewell and welcome! 't is the same, indeed,
As grief beforehand: clearly, part for part,
Conformably to Kalchas' art,
Shall come the event.
But be they as they may, things subsequent, —
What is to do, prosperity betide
E'en as we wish it! — we, the next allied,
Sole guarding barrier of the Apian land.

I am come, reverencing power in thee,
O Klutaimnestra! For 't is just we bow
To the ruler's wife, — the male-seat man-bereaved.
But if thou, having heard good news, — or none, —
For good news' hope dost sacrifice thus wide,
I would hear gladly: art thou mute, — no grudge!

KLUTAIMNESTRA.

Good-news-announcer, may — as is the by-word —
Morn become, truly, — news from Night his mother!
But thou shalt learn joy past all hope of hearing.
Priamos' city have the Argeioi taken.

CHOROS.

How sayest? The word, from want of faith, escaped me.

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KLUTAIMNESTRA.

Troia the Achaioi hold: do I speak plainly?

CHOROS.

Joy overcreeps me, calling forth the tear-drop.

KLUTAIMNESTRA.

Right! for, that glad thou art, thine eye convicts thee.

CHOROS.

For — what to thee, of all this, trusty token?

KLUTAIMNESTRA.

What 's here! how else? unless the god have cheated.

CHOROS.

Haply thou flattering shows of dreams respectest?

KLUTAIMNESTRA.

No fancy would I take of soul sleep-burdened.

CHOROS.

But has there puffed thee up some unwinged omen?

KLUTAIMNESTRA.

As a young maid 's my mind thou mockest grossly.

CHOROS.

Well, at what time was — even sacked, the city?

KLUTAIMNESTRA.

Of this same mother Night — the dawn, I tell thee.

CHOROS.

And who of messengers could reach this swiftness?

KLUTAIMNESTRA.

Hephaistos — sending a bright blaze from Idé.
Beacon did beacon send, from fire the poster,
Hitherward: Idé to the rock Hermaian
Of Lemnos: and a third great torch o' the island
Zeus' seat received in turn, the Athoan summit.
And, — so upsoaring as to stride sea over,
The strong lamp-voyager, and all for joyance —
Did the gold-glorious splendor, any sun like,

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Pass on — the pine-tree — to Makistos' watch-place;
Who did not, — tardy, — caught, no wits about him,
By sleep, — decline his portion of the missive.
And far the beacon's light, on stream Euripos
Arriving, made aware Messapios' warders,
And up they lit in turn, played herald onwards,
Kindling with flame a heap of gray old heather.
And, strengthening still, the lamp, decaying nowise,
Springing o'er Plain Asopos, — fullmoon-fashion
Effulgent, — toward the crag of Mount Kithairon,
Roused a new rendering-up of fire the escort —
And light, far escort, lacked no recognition
O' the guard — as burning more than burnings told you.
And over Lake Gorgopis light went leaping,
And, at Mount Aigiplanktos safe arriving,
Enforced the law — "to never stint the fire-stuff."
And they send, lighting up with ungrudged vigor,
Of flame a huge beard, ay, the very foreland
So as to strike above, in burning onward,
The look-out which commands the Strait Saronic.
Then did it dart until it reached the outpost
Mount Arachnaios here, the city's neighbor;
And then darts to this roof of the Atreidai
This light of Idé's fire not unforefathered!
Such are the rules prescribed the flambeau-bearers:
He beats that 's first and also last in running.
Such is the proof and token I declare thee,
My husband having sent me news from Troia.

CHOROS.

The gods, indeed, anon will I pray, woman!
But now, these words to hear, and sate my wonder
Thoroughly, I am fain — if twice thou tell them.

KLUTAIMNESTRA.

Troia do the Achaioi hold, this same day.
I think a noise — no mixture — reigns i' the city.
Sour wine and unguent pour thou in one vessel —
Standers-apart, not lovers, would'st thou style them:
And so, of captives and of conquerors, partwise
The voices are to hear, of fortune diverse.
For those, indeed, upon the bodies prostrate
Of husbands, brothers, children upon parents
— The old men, from a throat that 's free no longer,
Shriekingly wail the death-doom of their dearest:
While these — the after-battle hungry labor,

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Which prompts night-faring, marshals them to breakfast
On the town's store, according to no billet
Of sharing, but as each drew lot of fortune.
In the spear-captured Troic habitations
House they already: from the frosts upæthral
And dews delivered, will they, luckless creatures,
Without a watch to keep, slumber all night through.
And if they fear the gods, the city-guarders,
And the gods' structures of the conquered country,
They may not — capturers — soon in turn be captive.
But see no prior lust befall the army
To sack things sacred — by gain-cravings vanquished!
For there needs homeward the return's salvation,
To round the new limb back o' the double racecourse.
And guilty to the gods if came the army,
Awakened up the sorrow of those slaughtered
Might be — should no outbursting evils happen.
But may good beat — no turn to see i' the balance!
For, many benefits I want the gain of.

CHOROS.

Woman, like prudent man thou kindly speakest.
And I, thus having heard thy trusty tokens,
The gods to rightly hail forthwith prepare me;
For, grace that must be paid has crowned our labors.

O Zeus the king, and friendly Night
Of these brave boons bestower —
Thou who didst fling on Troia's every tower
The o'er-roofing snare, that neither great thing might,
Nor any of the young ones, overpass
Captivity's great sweep-net — one and all
Of Até held in thrall!
Ay, Zeus I fear — the guest's friend great — who was
The doer of this, and long since bent
The bow on Alexandros with intent
That neither wide o' the white
Nor o'er the stars the foolish dart should light.
The stroke of Zeus — they have it, as men say!
This, at least, from the source track forth we may!
As he ordained, so has he done.
"No" — said someone —
"The gods think fit to care
Nowise for mortals, such
As those by whom the good and fair
Of things denied their touch

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Is trampled!" but he was profane.
That they do care, has been made plain
To offspring of the over-bold,
Outbreathing "Ares" greater than is just —
Houses that spill with more than they can hold,
More than is best for man. Be man's what must
Keep harm off, so that in himself he find
Sufficiency — the well-endowed of mind!
For there 's no bulwark in man's wealth to him
Who, through a surfeit, kicks — into the dim
And disappearing — Right's great altar.

Yes —

It urges him, the sad persuasiveness,
Até's insufferable child that schemes
Treason beforehand: and all cure is vain.
It is not hidden: out it glares again,
A light dread-lamping-mischief, just as gleams
The badness of the bronze;
Through rubbing, puttings to the touch,
Black-clotted is he, judged at once.
He seeks — the boy — a flying bird to clutch,
The insufferable brand
Setting upon the city of his land
Whereof not any god hears prayer;
While him who brought about such evils there,
That unjust man, the god in grapple throws.
Such an one, Paris goes
Within the Atreidai's house —
Shamed the guest's board by robbery of the spouse.

And, leaving to her townsmen throngs a-spread
With shields, and spear-thrusts of sea-armament,
And bringing Ilion, in a dowry's stead,
Destruction — swiftly through the gates she went,
Daring the undarable. But many a groan outbroke
From prophets of the House as thus they spoke.
"Woe, woe the House, the House and Rulers, — woe
The marriage-bed and dints
A husband's love imprints!
There she stands silent! meets no honor — no
Shame — sweetest still to see of things gone long ago!
And, through desire of one across the main,
A ghost will seem within the house to reign:
And hateful to the husband is the grace
Of well-shaped statues: from — in place of eyes,
Those blanks — all Aphrodité dies.

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"But dream-appearing mournful fantasies —
There they stand, bringing grace that 's vain.
For vain 't is, when brave things one seems to view;
The fantasy has floated off, hands through;
Gone, that appearance, — nowise left to creep, —
On wings, the servants in the paths of sleep!"
Woes, then, in household and on hearth, are such
As these — and woes surpassing these by much.
But not these only: everywhere —
For those who from the land
Of Hellas issued in a band,
Sorrow, the heart must bear,
Sits in the home of each, conspicuous there.
Many a circumstance, at least,
Touches the very breast.
For those
Whom any sent away, — he knows:
And in the live man's stead,
Armor and ashes reach
The house of each.

For Ares, gold-exchanger for the dead,
And balance-holder in the fight o' the spear,
Due-weight from Ilion sends —
What moves the tear on tear —
A charred scrap to the friends:
Filling with well-packed ashes every urn,
For man — that was — the sole return.
And they groan — praising much, the while,
Now this man as experienced in the strife,
Now that, fallen nobly on a slaughtered pile,
Because of — not his own — another's wife.
But things there be, one barks,
When no man harks:
A surreptitious grief that 's grudge
Against the Atreidai who first sought the judge.
But some there, round the rampart, have
In Ilian earth, each one his grave:
All fair-formed as at birth,
It hid them — what they have and hold — the hostile earth.

And big with anger goes the city's word,
And pays a debt by public curse incurred.
And ever with me — as about to hear
A something night-involved — remains my fear:
Since of the many-slayers — not

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Unwatching are the gods.
The black Erinues, at due periods —
Whoever gains the lot
Of fortune with no right —
Him, by life's strain and stress
Back-again-beaten from success,
They strike blind: and among the out-of-sight
For who has got to be, avails no might.
The being praised outrageously
Is grave, for at the eyes of such an one
Is launched, from Zeus, the thunder-stone.
Therefore do I decide
For so much and no more prosperity
Than of his envy passes unespied.
Neither a city-sacker would I be,
Nor life, myself by others captive, see.

A swift report has gone our city through,
From fire, the good-news messenger: if true,
Who knows? Or is it not a god-sent lie?
Who is so childish and deprived of sense
That, having, at announcements of the flame
Thus novel, felt his own heart fired thereby,
He then shall, at a change of evidence,
Be worsted just the same?
It is conspicuous in a woman's nature,
Before its view to take a grace for granted:
Too trustful, — on her boundary, usurpature
Is swiftly made;
But swiftly, too, decayed,
The glory perishes by woman vaunted.

KLUTAIMNESTRA.

Soon shall we know — of these light-bearing torches,
And beacons and exchanges, fire with fire —
If they are true, indeed, or if, dream-fashion,
This gladsome light came and deceived our judgment.
Yon herald from the shore I see, o'ershadowed
With boughs of olive: dust, mud's thirsty brother,
Close neighbors on his garb, thus testify me
That neither voiceless, nor yet kindling for thee
Mountain-wood-flame, shall he explain by fire-smoke:
But either tell out more the joyance, speaking . . .
Word contrary to which, I aught but love it!
For may good be — to good that 's known — appendage!

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CHOROS.

Whoever prays for aught else to this city
— May he himself reap fruit of his mind's error!

HERALD.

Ha, my forefathers' soil of earth Argeian!
Thee, in this year's tenth light, am I returned to —
Of many broken hopes, on one hope chancing;
For never prayed I, in this earth Argeian
Dying, to share my part in tomb the dearest.
Now, hail thou earth, and hail thou also, sunlight,
And Zeus, the country's lord, and king the Puthian
From bow no longer urging at us arrows!
Enough, beside Skamandros, cam'st thou adverse:
Now, contrary, be savior thou and healer,
O king Apollon! And gods conquest-granting,
All — I invoke too, and my tutelary
Hermes, dear herald, heralds' veneration, —
And Heroes our forthsenders, — friendly, once more
The army to receive, the war-spear's leavings!
Ha, mansions of my monarchs, roofs beloved,
And awful seats, and deities sun-fronting —
Receive with pomp your monarch, long time absent!
For he comes bringing light in night-time to you,
In common with all these — king Agamemnon.
But kindly greet him — for clear shows your duty —
Who has dug under Troia with the mattock
Of Zeus the Avenger, whereby plains are out-ploughed,
Altars unrecognizable, and god's shrines,
And the whole land's seed thoroughly has perished.
And such a yoke-strap having cast round Troia,
The elder king Atreides, happy man — he
Comes to be honored, worthiest of what mortals
Now are. Nor Paris nor the accomplice-city
Outvaunts their deed as more than they are done-by:
For, in a suit for rape and theft found guilty,
He missed of plunder and, in one destruction,
Fatherland, house and home has mowed to atoms:
Debts the Priamidai have paid twice over.

CHOROS.

Hail, herald from the army of Achaians!

HERALD.

I hail: — to die, will gainsay gods no longer!

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CHOROS.

Love of this fatherland did exercise thee?

HERALD.

So that I weep, at least, with joy, my eyes full.

CHOROS.

What, of this gracious sickness were ye gainers?

HERALD.

How now? instructed, I this speech shall master.

CHOROS.

For those who loved you back, with longing stricken.

HERALD.

This land yearned for the yearning army, say'st thou?

CHOROS.

So as to set me oft, from dark mind, groaning.

HERALD.

Whence came this ill mind — hatred to the army?

CHOROS.

Of old, I use, for mischief's physic, silence.

HERALD.

And how, the chiefs away, did you fear any?

CHOROS.

So that now — late thy word — much joy were — dying!

HERALD.

For well have things been worked out: these, — in much time,
Some of them, one might say, had luck in falling,
While some were faulty: since who, gods excepted,
Goes, through the whole time of his life, ungrieving?
For labors should I tell of, and bad lodgments,
Narrow deckways ill-strewn, too, — what the day's woe
We did not groan at getting for our portion?
As for land-things, again, on went more hatred!
Since beds were ours hard by the foemen's ramparts,
And, out of heaven and from the earth, the meadow
Dews kept a-sprinkle, an abiding damage

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Of vestures, making hair a wild-beast matting.
Winter, too, if one told of it — bird-slaying —
Such as, unbearable, Idaian snow brought —
Or heat, when waveless, on its noontide couches
Without a wind, the sea would slumber falling
— Why must one mourn these? O'er and gone is labor:
O'er and gone is it, even to those dead ones,
So that no more again they mind uprising.
Why must we tell in numbers those deprived ones,
And the live man be vexed with fate's fresh outbreak?
Rather, I bid full farewell to misfortunes!
For us, the left from out the Argeian army,
The gain beats, nor does sorrow counterbalance.
So that 't is fitly boasted of, this sunlight,
By us, o'er sea and land the aery flyers,
"Troia at last taking, the band of Argives
Hang up such trophies to the gods of Hellas
Within their domes — new glory to grow ancient!"
Such things men having heard must praise the city
And army-leaders: and the grace which wrought them —
Of Zeus, shall honored be. Thou hast my whole word.

CHOROS.

O'ercome by words, their sense I do not gainsay.
For, aye this breeds youth in the old — "to learn well."
But these things most the house and Klutaimnestra
Concern, 't is likely: while they make me rich, too.

KLUTAIMNESTRA.

I shouted long ago, indeed, for joyance,
When came that first night-messenger of fire
Proclaiming Ilion's capture and dispersion.
And someone, girding me, said, "Through fire-bearers
Persuaded — Troia to be sacked now, thinkest?
Truly, the woman's way, — high to lift heart up!"
By such words I was made seem wit-bewildered:
Yet still I sacrificed; and, — female-song with, —
A shout one man and other, through the city,
Set up, congratulating in the gods' seats,
Soothing the incense-eating flame right fragrant.
And now, what 's more, indeed, why need'st thou tell me?
I of the king himself shall learn the whole word:
And, — as may best be, — I my revered husband
Shall hasten, as he comes back, to receive: for —
What 's to a wife sweeter to see than this light
(Her husband, by the god saved, back from warfare)

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So as to open gates? This tell my husband —
To come at soonest to his loving city.
A faithful wife at home may he find, coming!
Such an one as he left — the dog o' the household —
Trusty to him, adverse to the ill-minded,
And, in all else, the same: no signet-impress
Having done harm to, in that time's duration.
I know nor pleasure, nor blameworthy converse
With any other man more than — bronze-dippings!

HERALD.

Such boast as this — brimful of the veracious —
Is for a high-born dame not bad to send forth!

CHOROS.

Ay, she spoke thus to thee — that hast a knowledge
From clear interpreters — a speech most seemly!
But speak thou, herald! Meneleos I ask of:
If he, returning, back in safety also
Will come with you — this land's beloved chieftain?

HERALD.

There 's no way I might say things false and pleasant
For friends to reap the fruits of through a long time.

CHOROS.

How then, if, speaking good, things true thou chance on?

HERALD.

For not well-hidden things become they, sundered.
The man has vanished from the Achaic army,
He and his ship too. I announce no falsehood.

CHOROS.

Whether forth-putting openly from Ilion,
Or did storm — wide woe — snatch him from the army?

HERALD.

Like topping bowman, thou hast touched the target,
And a long sorrow hast succinctly spoken.

CHOROS.

Whether, then, of him, as a live or dead man
Was the report by other sailors bruited?

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HERALD.

Nobody knows so as to tell out clearly
Excepting Helios who sustains earth's nature.

CHOROS.

How say'st thou then, did storm the naval army
Attack and end, by the celestials' anger?

HERALD.

It suits not to defile a day auspicious
With ill-announcing speech: distinct each god's due:
And when a messenger with gloomy visage
To a city bears a fall'n host's woes — God ward off! —
One popular wound that happens to the city,
And many sacrificed from many households —
Men, scourged by that two-thonged whip Ares loves so,
Double spear-headed curse, bloody yoke-couple, —
Of woes like these, doubtless, whoe'er comes weighted,
Him does it suit to sing the Erinues' paian.
But who, of matters saved a glad-news-bringer,
Comes to a city in good estate rejoicing. . . .
How shall I mix good things with evil, telling
Of storm against the Achaioi, urged by gods' wrath?
For they swore league, being arch-foes before that,
Fire and the sea: and plighted troth approved they,
Destroying the unhappy Argeian army.
At night began the bad-wave-outbreak evils;
For, ships against each other Threkian breezes
Shattered: and these, butted at in a fury
By storm and typhoon, with surge rain-resounding, —
Off they went, vanished, through a bad herd's whirling.
And, when returned the brilliant light of Helios,
We view the Aigaian sea on flower with corpses
Of men Achaian and with naval ravage.
But us indeed, and ship, unhurt i' the hull too,
Either some one out-stole us or out-prayed us —
Some god — no man it was the tiller touching.
And Fortune, savior, willing on our ship sat.
So as it neither had in harbor wave-surge
Nor ran aground against a shore all rocky.
And then, the water-Haides having fled from
In the white day, not trusting to our fortune,
We chewed the cud in thoughts — this novel sorrow
O' the army laboring and badly pounded.
And now — if anyone of them is breathing —

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They talk of us as having perished: why not?
And we — that they the same fate have, imagine.
May it be for the best! Meneleos, then,
Foremost and specially to come, expect thou!
If (that is) any ray o' the sun reports him
Living and seeing too — by Zeus' contrivings,
Not yet disposed to quite destroy the lineage —
Some hope is he shall come again to household.
Having heard such things, know, thou truth art hearing!

CHOROS.

Who may he have been that named thus wholly with exactitude —
(Was he someone whom we see not, by forecastings of the future
Guiding tongue in happy mood?)
— Her with battle for a bridegroom, on all sides contention-wooed,
Helena? Since — mark the suture! —
Ship's-Hell, Man's-Hell, City's-Hell,
From the delicately-pompous curtains that pavilion well,
Forth, by favor of the gale
Of earth-born Zephuros did she sail.
Many shield-bearers, leaders of the pack,
Sailed too upon their track,
Theirs who had directed oar,
Then visible no more,
To Simois' leaf-luxuriant shore —
For sake of strife all gore!

To Ilion Wrath, fulfilling her intent,
This marriage-care — the rightly named so — sent:
In after-time, for the tables' abuse
And that of the hearth-partaker Zeus,
Bringing to punishment
Those who honored with noisy throat
The honor of the bride, the hymenæal note
Which did the kinsfolk then to singing urge.
But, learning a new hymn for that which was,
The ancient city of Priamos
Groans probably a great and general dirge,
Denominating Paris
"The man that miserably marries:" —
She who, all the while before,
A life, that was a general dirge
For citizens' unhappy slaughter, bore.

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And thus a man, by no milk's help,
Within his household reared a lion's whelp
That loved the teat
In life's first festal stage:
Gentle as yet,
A true child-lover, and, to men of age,
A thing whereat pride warms;
And oft he had it in his arms
Like any new-born babe, bright-faced, to hand
Wagging its tail, at belly's strict command.

But in due time upgrown,
The custom of progenitors was shown:
For — thanks for sustenance repaying
With ravage of sheep slaughtered —
It made unbidden feast;
With blood the house was watered,
To household came a woe there was no staying
Great mischief many-slaying!
From God it was — some priest
Of Até, in the house, by nurture thus increased.

At first, then, to the city of Ilion went
A soul, as I might say, of windless calm —
Wealth's quiet ornament,
An eyes'-dart bearing balm,
Love's spirit-biting flower.
But — from the true course bending —
She brought about, of marriage, bitter ending:
Ill-resident, ill-mate, in power
Passing to the Priamidai — by sending
Of Hospitable Zeus —
Erinus for a bride, — to make brides mourn, her dower.

Spoken long ago
Was the ancient saying
Still among mortals staying:
"Man's great prosperity at height of rise
Engenders offspring nor unchilded dies;
And, from good fortune, to such families,
Buds forth insatiate woe."
Whereas, distinct from any,
Of my own mind I am:
For 't is the unholy deed begets the many,
Resembling each its dam.
Of households that correctly estimate,
Ever a beauteous child is born of Fate.

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But ancient Arrogance delights to generate
Arrogance, young and strong 'mid mortals' sorrow,
Or now, or then, when comes the appointed morrow.
And she bears young Satiety;
And, fiend with whom nor fight nor war can be,
Unholy Daring — twin black Curses
Within the household, children like their nurses.

But Justice shines in smoke-grimed habitations,
And honors the well-omened life;
While, — gold-besprinkled stations
Where the hands' filth is rife,
With backward-turning eyes
Leaving, — to holy seats she hies,
Not worshipping the power of wealth
Stamped with applause by stealth:
And to its end directs each thing begun.

Approach then, my monarch, of Troia the sacker, of Atreus the son!
How ought I address thee, how ought I revere thee, — nor yet overhitting
Nor yet underbending the grace that is fitting?
Many of mortals hasten to honor the seeming-to-be —
Passing by justice: and, with the ill-faring, to groan as he groans all are free.
But no bite of the sorrow their liver has reached to:
They say with the joyful, — one outside on each, too,
As they force to a smile smileless faces.
But whoever is good at distinguishing races
In sheep of his flock — it is not for the eyes
Of a man to escape such a shepherd's surprise,
As they seem, from a well-wishing mind,
In watery friendship to fawn and be kind.
Thou to me, then, indeed, sending an army for Helena's sake,
(I will not conceal it,) wast — oh, by no help of the Muses! — depicted
Not well of thy midriff the rudder directing, — convicted
Of bringing a boldness they did not desire to the men with existence at stake.
But now — from no outside of mind, nor unlovingly — gracious thou art
To those who have ended the labor, fulfilling their part;
And in time shalt thou know, by inquiry instructed,
Who of citizens justly, and who not to purpose, the city conducted.

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AGAMEMNON.

First, indeed, Argos, and the gods, the local,
'T is right addressing — those with me the partners
In this return and right things done the city
Of Priamos: gods who, from no tongue hearing
The rights o' the cause, for Ilion's fate man-slaught'rous
Into the bloody vase, not oscillating,
Put the vote-pebbles, while, o' the rival vessel,
Hope rose up to the lip-edge: filled it was not.
By smoke the captured city is still conspicuous:
Até's burnt-offerings live: and, dying with them,
The ash sends forth the fulsome blasts of riches.
Of these things, to the gods grace many-mindful
'T is right I render, since both nets outrageous
We built them round with, and, for sake of woman,
It did the city to dust — the Argeian monster,
The horse's nestling, the shield-bearing people
That made a leap, at setting of the Pleiads,
And, vaulting o'er the tower, the raw-flesh-feeding
Lion licked up his fill of blood tyrannic.
I to the gods indeed prolonged this preface;
But — as for *thy* thought, I remember hearing —
I say the same, and thou co-pleader hast me.
Since few of men this faculty is born with —
To honor, without grudge, their friend successful.
For moody, on the heart, a poison seated
Its burden doubles to who gained the sickness:
By his own griefs he is himself made heavy,
And out-of-door prosperity seeing groans at.
Knowing, I 'd call (for well have I experienced)
"Fellowship's mirror," "phantom of a shadow,"
Those seeming to be mighty gracious to me:
While just Odusseus — he who sailed not willing —
When joined on, was to me the ready trace-horse.
This of him, whether dead or whether living,
I say. For other city-and-gods' concernment —
Appointing common courts, in full assemblage
We will consult. And as for what holds seemly —
How it may lasting stay well, must be counselled:
While what has need of medicines Paionian
We, either burning or else cutting kindly,
Will make endeavor to turn pain from sickness.
And now into the domes and homes by altar
Going, I to the gods first raise the right-hand —
They who, far sending, back again have brought me.
And Victory, since she followed, fixed remain she!

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KLUTAIMNESTRA.

Men, citizens, Argeians here, my worships!
I shall not shame me, consort-loving manners
To tell before you: for in time there dies off
The diffidence from people. Not from others
Learning, I of myself will tell the hard life
I bore so long as this man was 'neath Ilion.
First: for a woman, from the male divided,
To sit at home alone, is monstrous evil —
Hearing the many rumors back-revenging:
And for now This to come, now That bring after
Woe, and still worse woe, bawling in the household!
And truly, if so many wounds had chanced on
My husband here, as homeward used to dribble
Report, he 's pierced more than a net to speak of!
While, were he dying (as the words abounded)
A triple-bodied Geruon the Second,
Plenty above — for loads below I count not —
Of earth a three-share cloak he 'd boast of taking,
Once only dying in each several figure!
Because of such-like rumors back-revenging,
Many the halters from my neck, above head,
Others than *I* loosed — loosed from neck by main force
From this cause, sure, the boy stands not beside me —
Possessor of our troth-plights, thine and mine too —
As ought Orestes: be not thou astonished!
For, him brings up our well-disposed guest-captive
Strophios the Phokian — ills that told on both sides
To me predicting — both of thee 'neath Ilion
The danger, and if anarchy's mob-uproar
Should o'erthrow thy council; since it is born with
Mortals, — whoe'er has fallen, the more to kick him.
Such an excuse, I think, no cunning carries!
As for myself — why, of my wails the rushing
Fountains are dried up: not in them a drop more!
And in my late-to-bed eyes have I damage
Bewailing what concerned thee, those torch-holdings
Forever unattended to. In dreams — why,
Beneath the light wing-beats o' the gnat, I woke up
As he went buzzing — sorrows that concerned thee
Seeing, that filled more than their fellow-sleep-time.
Now, all this having suffered, from soul grief-free
I would style this man here the dog o' the stables,
The savior forestay of the ship, the high roof's
Ground-prop, son sole-begotten to his father,

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— Ay, land appearing to the sailors past hope,
Loveliest day to see after a tempest,
To the wayfaring-one athirst a well-spring,
— The joy, in short, of 'scaping all that 's — fatal!
I judge him worth addresses such as these are
— Envy stand off! — for many those old evils
We underwent. And now, to me — dear headship! —
Dismount thou from this car, not earthward setting
The foot of thine, O king, that 's Ilion's spoiler!
Slave-maids, why tarry? — whose the task allotted.
The soil o' the road to strew with carpet-spreadings.
Immediately be purple-strewn the pathway,
So that to home unhoped may lead him — Justice!
As for the rest, care shall — by no sleep conquered —
Dispose things — justly (gods to aid!) appointed.

AGAMEMNON.

Offspring of Leda, of my household warder,
Suitably to my absence hast thou spoken,
For long the speech thou didst outstretch! But aptly
To praise — from others ought to go this favor.
And for the rest, — not me, in woman's fashion,
Mollify, nor — as mode of barbarous man is —
To me gape forth a groundward-falling clamor!
Nor, strewing it with garments, make my passage
Envied! Gods, sure, with these behoves us honor:
But, for a mortal on these varied beauties
To walk — to me, indeed, is nowise fear-free.
I say — as man, not god, to me do homage!
Apart from foot-mats both and varied vestures,
Renown is loud, and — not to lose one's senses,
God's greatest gift. Behoves we him call happy
Who has brought life to end in loved wellbeing.
If all things I might manage thus — brave man, I!

KLUTAIMNESTRA.

Come now, this say, nor feign a feeling to me!

AGAMEMNON.

With feeling, know indeed, I do not tamper!

KLUTAIMNESTRA.

Vowedst thou to the gods, in fear, to act thus?

AGAMEMNON.

If any, *I* well knew resolve I outspoke.

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KLUTAIMNESTRA.

What think'st thou Priamos had done, thus victor?

AGAMEMNON.

On varied vests — I do think — he had passaged.

KLUTAIMNESTRA.

Then, do not, struck with awe at human censure. . . .

AGAMEMNON.

Well, popular mob-outcry much avails too!

KLUTAIMNESTRA.

Ay, but the unenvied is not the much valued.

AGAMEMNON.

Sure, 't is no woman's part to long for battle!

KLUTAIMNESTRA.

Why, to the prosperous, even suits a beating!

AGAMEMNON.

What? thou this beating us in war dost prize too?

KLUTAIMNESTRA.

Persuade thee! power, for once, grant *me* — and willing!

AGAMEMNON.

But if this seem so to thee — shoes, let someone
Loose under, quick — foot's serviceable carriage!
And me, on these sea-products walking, may no
Grudge from a distance, from the god's eye, strike at!
For great shame were my strewment-spoiling — riches
Spoiling with feet, and silver-purchased textures!
Of these things, thus then. But this female-stranger
Tenderly take inside! Who conquers mildly
God, from afar, benignantly regardeth.
For, willing, no one wears a yoke that's servile:
And she, of many valuables, outpicked
The flower, the army's gift, myself has followed.
So — since to hear thee, I am brought about thus, —
I go into the palace — purples treading.

KLUTAIMNESTRA.

There is the sea — and what man shall exhaust it? —
Feeding much purple's worth-its-weight-in-silver

Dye, ever fresh and fresh, our garments' tincture;
At home, such wealth, king, we begin — by gods' help —
With having, and to lack, the household knows not.
Of many garments had I vowed a treading
(In oracles if fore-enjoined the household)
Of this dear soul the safe-return-price scheming!
For, root existing, foliage goes up houses,
Shadow o'erspreading against Seirios dog-star;
And, thou returning to the hearth domestic,
Warmth, yea, in winter dost thou show returning.
And when, too, Zeus works, from the green-grape acrid,
Wine — then, already, cool in houses cometh —
The perfect man his home perambulating!
Zeus, Zeus Perfecter, these my prayers perfect thou!
Thy care be — yea — of things thou may'st make perfect!

CHOROS.

Wherefore to me, this fear —
Groundedly stationed here
Fronting my heart, the portent-watcher — flits she?
Wherefore should prophet-play
The uncalled and unpaid lay,
Nor — having spat forth fear, like bad dreams — sits she
On the mind's throne beloved — well-suasive Boldness?
For time, since, by a throw of all the hands,
The boat's stern-cables touched the sands,
Has passed from youth to oldness, —
When under Ilion rushed the ship-borne bands.

And from my eyes I learn —
Being myself my witness — their return.
Yet, all the same, without a lyre, my soul,
Itself its teacher too, chants from within
Erinus' dirge, not having now the whole
Of Hope's dear boldness: nor my inwards sin —
The heart that 's rolled in whirls against the mind
Justly presageful of a fate behind.
But I pray — things false, from my hope, may fall
Into the fate that 's not-fulfilled-at-all!

Especially at least, of health that 's great
The term 's insatiable: for, its weight
— A neighbor, with a common wall between —
Ever will sickness lear;
And destiny, her course pursuing straight,
Has struck man's ship against a reef unseen.

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Now, when a portion, rather than the treasure,
Fear casts from sling, with peril in right measure,
It has not sunk — the universal freight,
(With misery freighted over-full,)
Nor has fear whelmed the hull.
Then too the gift of Zeus,
Two-handedly profuse,
Even from the furrows' yield for yearly use
Has done away with famine, the disease;
But blood of man to earth once falling, — deadly, black, —
In times ere these, —
Who may, by singing spells, call back?
Zeus had not else stopped one who rightly knew
The way to bring the dead again.
But, did not an appointed Fate constrain
The Fate from gods, to bear no more than due,
My heart, outstripping what tongue utters,
Would have all out: which now, in darkness, mutters
Moodily grieved, nor ever hopes to find
How she a word in season may unwind
From out the enkindling mind.

KLUTAIMNESTRA.

Take thyself in, thou too — I say, Kassandra!
Since Zeus — not angrily — in household placed thee
Partaker of hand-sprinklings, with the many
Slaves stationed, his the Owner's altar close to.
Descend from out this car, nor be high-minded!
And truly they do say Alkmene's child once
Bore being sold, slaves' barley-bread his living.
If, then, necessity of this lot o'erbalance,
Much is the favor of old-wealthy masters:
For those who, never hoping, made fine harvest
Are harsh to slaves in all things, beyond measure.
Thou hast — with us — such usage as law warrants.

CHOROS.

To thee it was, she paused plain speech from speaking.
Being inside the fatal nets — obeying,
Thou may'st obey: but thou may'st disobey too!

KLUTAIMNESTRA.

Why, if she is not, in the swallow's fashion,
Possessed of voice that 's unknown and barbaric,
I, with speech — speaking in mind's scope — persuade her

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CHOROS.

Follow! The best — as things now stand — she speaks of.
Obey thou, leaving this thy car-enthronement!

KLUTAIMNESTRA.

Well, with this thing at door, for me no leisure
To waste time: as concerns the hearth mid-navelled,
Already stand the sheep for fireside slaying
By those who never hoped to have such favor.
If thou, then, aught of this wilt do, delay not!
But if thou, being witless, tak'st no word in,
Speak thou, instead of voice, with hand as Kars do!

CHOROS.

She seems a plain interpreter in need of,
The stranger! and her way — a beast's new-captured!

KLUTAIMNESTRA.

Why, she is mad, sure, — hears her own bad senses, —
Who, while she comes, leaving a town new-captured,
Yet knows not how to bear the bit o' the bridle
Before she has out-frothed her bloody fierceness.
Not I — throwing away more words — will shamed be!

CHOROS.

But I, — for I compassionate, — will chafe not.
Come, O unhappy one, this car vacating,
Yielding to this necessity, prove yoke's use!

KASSANDRA.

Ototototoi, Gods, Earth —
Apollon, Apollon!

CHOROS.

Why didst thou "ototoi" concerning Loxias?
Since he is none such as to suit a mourner.

KASSANDRA.

Ototototoi, Gods, Earth, —
Apollon, Apollon!

CHOROS.

Ill-boding here again the god invokes she
— Nowise empowered in woes to stand by helpful.

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KASSANDRA.

Apollon, Apollon,
Guard of the ways, my destroyer!
For thou hast quite, this second time, destroyed me.

CHOROS.

To prophesy she seems of her own evils:
Remains the god-gift to the slave-soul present.

KASSANDRA.

Apollon, Apollon,
Guard of the ways, my destroyer!
Ha, whither hast thou led me? to what roof now?

CHOROS.

To the Atreidai's roof: if this thou know'st not,
I tell it thee, nor this wilt thou call falsehood.

KASSANDRA.

How! how!
God-hated, then! Of many a crime it knew —
Self-slaying evils, halters too:
Man's-shambles, blood-besprinkler of the ground!

CHOROS.

She seems to be good-nosed, the stranger: dog-like,
She snuffs indeed the victims she will find there.

KASSANDRA.

How! how!
By the witnesses here I am certain now!
These children bewailing their slaughters — flesh dressed in the fire
And devoured by their sire!

CHOROS.

Ay, we have heard of thy soothsaying glory,
Doubtless: but prophets none are we in scent of!

KASSANDRA.

Ah, gods, what ever does she meditate?
What this new anguish great?
Great in the house here she meditates ill
Such as friends cannot bear, cannot cure it: and still
Off stands all Resistance
Afar in the distance!

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CHOROS.

Of these I witless am — these prophesyings.
But those I knew: for the whole city bruits them.

KASSANDRA.

Ah, unhappy one, this thou consummatest?
Thy husband, thy bed's common guest,
In the bath having brightened. . . . How shall I declare
Consummation? It soon will be there:
For hand after hand she outstretches,
At life as she reaches!

CHOROS.

Nor yet I 've gone with thee! for — after riddles —
Now, in blind oracles, I feel resourceless.

KASSANDRA.

Eh, eh, papai, papai,
What this, I espy?
Some net of Haides undoubtedly!
Nay, rather, the snare
Is she who has share
In his bed, who takes part in the murder there!
But may a revolt —
Unceasing assault —
On the Race, raise a shout
Sacrificial, about
A victim — by stoning —
For murder atoning!

CHOROS.

What this Erinus which i' the house thou callest
To raise her cry? Not me thy word enlightens!
To my heart has run
A drop of the crocus-dye:
Which makes for those
On earth by the spear that lie,
A common close
With life's descending sun.
Swift is the curse begun!

KASSANDRA.

How! how!
See — see quick!
Keep the bull from the cow!

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In the vesture she catching him, strikes him now
With the black-horned trick,
And he falls in the watery vase!
Of the craft-killing caldron I tell thee the case!

CHOROS.

I would not boast to be a topping critic
Of oracles: but to some sort of evil
I liken these. From oracles, what good speech
To mortals, beside, is sent?
It comes of their evils: these arts word-abounding that sing the event
Bring the fear 't is their office to teach.

KASSANDRA.

Ah me, ah me —
Of me unhappy, evil-destined fortunes!
For I bewail my proper woe
As, mine with his, all into one I throw.
Why hast thou hither me unhappy brought?
— Unless that I should die with him — for naught!
What else was sought?

CHOROS.

Thou art some mind-mazed creature, god-possessed:
And all about thyself dost wail
A lay — no lay!
Like some brown nightingale
Insatiable of noise, who — well away! —
From her unhappy breast
Keeps moaning Itus, Itus, and his life
With evils, flourishing on each side, rife.

KASSANDRA.

Ah me, ah me,
The fate o' the nightingale, the clear resounder!
For a body wing-borne have the gods cast round her,
And sweet existence, from misfortunes free:
But for myself remains a sundering
With spear, the two-edged thing!

CHOROS.

Whence hast thou this on-rushing god-involving pain
And spasms in vain?
For, things that terrify,
With changing unintelligible cry

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Thou strikest up in tune, yet all the while
After that Orthian style!
Whence hast thou limits to the oracular road,
That evils bode?

KASSANDRA.

Ah me, the nuptials, the nuptials of Paris, the deadly to friends!
Ah me, of Skamandros the draught
Paternal! There once, to these ends,
On thy banks was I brought,
The unhappy! And now, by Kokutos and Acheron's shore
I shall soon be, it seems, these my oracles singing once more!

CHOROS.

Why this word, plain too much,
Hast thou uttered? A babe might learn of such!
I am struck with a bloody bite — here under —
At the fate woe-wreaking
Of thee shrill-shrieking:
To me who hear — a wonder!

KASSANDRA.

Ah me, the toils — the toils of the city
The wholly destroyed: ah, pity,
Of the sacrificings my father made
In the ramparts' aid —
Much slaughter of grass-fed flocks — that afforded no cure
That the city should not, as it does now, the burthen endure
But I, with the soul on fire,
Soon to the earth shall cast me and expire!

CHOROS.

To things, on the former consequent,
Again hast thou given vent:
And 't is some evil-meaning fiend doth move thee,
Heavily falling from above thee,
To melodize thy sorrows — else, in singing,
Calamitous, death-bringing!
And of all this the end
I am without resource to apprehend.

KASSANDRA.

Well then, the oracle from veils no longer
Shall be outlooking, like a bride new-married:
But bright it seems, against the sun's uprisings

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Breathing, to penetrate thee: so as, wave-like,
To wash against the rays a woe much greater
Than this. I will no longer teach by riddles.
And witness, running with me, that of evils
Done long ago, I nosing track the footstep!
For, this same roof here — never quits a Choros
One-voiced, not well-tuned since no "well" it utters:
And truly having drunk, to get more courage,
Man's blood — the Komos keeps within the household
— Hard to be sent outside — of sister Furies:
They hymn their hymn — within the house close sitting —
The first beginning curse: in turn spit forth at
The Brother's bed, to him who spurned it hostile.
Have I missed aught, or hit I like a bowman?
False prophet am I, — knock at doors, a babbler?
Henceforward witness, swearing now, I know not
By other's word the old sins of this household!

CHOROS.

And how should oath, bond honorably binding,
Become thy cure? No less I wonder at thee
— That thou, beyond sea reared, a strange-tongued city
Should'st hit in speaking, just as if thou stood'st by!

KASSANDRA.

Prophet Apollon put me in this office.

CHOROS.

What, even though a god, with longing smitten?

KASSANDRA.

At first, indeed, shame was to me to say this.

CHOROS.

For, more relaxed grows everyone who fares well.

KASSANDRA.

But he was athlete to me — huge grace breathing!

CHOROS.

Well, to the work of children, went ye law's way?

KASSANDRA.

Having consented, Loxias I played false to.

CHOROS.

Already when the wits inspired possessed of?

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KASSANDRA.

Already townsmen all their woes I foretold.

CHOROS.

How wast thou then unhurt by Loxias' anger?

KASSANDRA.

I no one aught persuaded, when I sinned thus.

CHOROS.

To us, at least, now sooth to say thou seemest.

KASSANDRA.

Halloo, halloo, ah, evils!
Again, straightforward foresight's fearful labor
Whirls me, distracting with prelusive last-lays!
Behold ye those there, in the household seated, —
Young ones, — of dreams approaching to the figures?
Children, as if they died by their beloveds —
Hands they have filled with flesh, the meal domestic —
Entrails and vitals both, most piteous burthen,
Plain they are holding! — which their father tasted!
For this, I say, plans punishment a certain
Lion ignoble, on the bed that wallows,
House-guard (ah, me!) to the returning master
— Mine, since to bear the slavish yoke behoves me!
The ships' commander, Ilion's desolator,
Knows not what things the tongue of the lewd she-dog
Speaking, outspreading, shiny-souled, in fashion
Of Até hid, will reach to, by ill fortune!
Such things she dares — the female, the male's slayer!
She is . . . how calling her the hateful bite-beast
May I hit the mark? Some amphisbaina — Skulla
Housing in rocks, of mariners the mischief,
Revelling Haides' mother, — curse, no truce with,
Breathing at friends! How piously she shouted,
The all-courageous, as at turn of battle!
She seems to joy at the back-bringing safety!
Of this, too, if I naught persuade, all 's one! Why?
What is to be will come! And soon thou, present,
"True prophet all too much" wilt pitying style me!

CHOROS.

Thuestes' feast, indeed, on flesh of children,
I went with, and I shuddered. Fear too holds me
Listing what 's true as life, nowise out-imaged!

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KASSANDRA.

I say, thou Agamemnon's fate shalt look on!

CHOROS.

Speak good words, O unhappy! Set mouth sleeping!

KASSANDRA.

But Paian stands in no stead to the speech here.

CHOROS.

Nay, if the thing be near: but never be it!

KASSANDRA.

Thou, indeed, prayest: they to kill are busy!

CHOROS.

Of what man is it ministered, this sorrow?

KASSANDRA.

There again, wide thou look'st of my foretellings.

CHOROS.

For, the fulfiller's scheme I have not gone with.

KASSANDRA.

And yet too well I know the speech Hellenic.

CHOROS.

For Puthian oracles, thy speech, and hard too!

KASSANDRA.

Papai: what fire this! and it comes upon me!
Ototoi, Lukeion Apollon, ah me — me!
She, the two-footed lioness that sleeps with
The wolf, in absence of the generous lion,
Kills me the unhappy one: and as a poison
Brewing, to put my price too in the anger,
She vows, against her mate this weapon whetting
To pay him back the bringing me, with slaughter.
Why keep I then these things to make me laughed at,
Both wands and, round my neck, oracular fillets?
Thee, at least, ere my own fate will I ruin:
Go, to perdition falling! Boons exchange we —
Some other Até in my stead make wealthy!
See there — himself, Apollon stripping from me

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The oracular garment! having looked upon me
— Even in these adornments, laughed by friends at,
As good as foes, i' the balance weighed: and vainly —
For, called crazed stroller, — as I had been gypsy,
Beggar, unhappy, starved to death, — I bore it.
And now the Prophet — prophet me undoing,
Has led away to these so deadly fortunes!
Instead of my sire's altar, waits the hack-block
She struck with first warm bloody sacrificing!
Yet nowise unavenged of gods will death be:
For there shall come another, our avenger,
The mother-slaying scion, father's doomsman:
Fugitive, wanderer, from this land an exile,
Back shall he come, — for friends, copestone these curses!
For there is sworn a great oath from the gods that
Him shall bring hither his fallen sire's prostration.
Why make I then, like an indweller, moaning?
Since at the first I foresaw Ilion's city
Suffering as it has suffered: and who took it,
Thus by the judgment of the gods are faring.
I go, will suffer, will submit to dying!
But, Haides' gates — these same I call, I speak to,
And pray that on an opportune blow chancing,
Without a struggle, — blood the calm death bringing
In easy outflow, — I this eye may close up!

CHOROS.

O much unhappy, but, again, much learned
Woman, long hast thou outstretched! But if truly
Thou knowest thine own fate, how comes that, like to
A god-led steer, to altar bold thou treadest?

KASSANDRA.

There 's no avoidance, — strangers, no! Some time more!

CHOROS.

He last is, anyhow, by time advantaged.

KASSANDRA.

It comes, the day: I shall by flight gain little.

CHOROS.

But know thou patient art from thy brave spirit!

KASSANDRA.

Such things hears no one of the happy-fortuned.

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CHOROS.

But gloriously to die — for man is grace, sure!

KASSANDRA.

Ah, sire, for thee and for thy noble children!

CHOROS.

But what thing is it? What fear turns thee backwards?

KASSANDRA.

Alas, alas!

CHOROS.

Why this "alas"? if 't is no spirit's loathing . . .

KASSANDRA.

Slaughter blood-dripping does the household smell of!

CHOROS.

How else? This scent is of hearth-sacrifices.

KASSANDRA.

Such kind of steam as from a tomb is proper!

CHOROS.

No Surian honor to the House thou speak'st of!

KASSANDRA.

But I will go, — even in the household wailing
My fate and Agamemnon's. Life suffice me!
Ah, strangers!
I cry not "ah" — as bird at bush — through terror
Idly! to me, the dead thus much bear witness:
When, for me — woman, there shall die a woman,
And, for a man ill-wived, a man shall perish!
This hospitality I ask as dying.

CHOROS.

O sufferer, thee — thy foretold fate I pity.

KASSANDRA.

Yet once for all, to speak a speech, I fain am:
No dirge, mine for myself! The sun I pray to,
Fronting his last light! — to my own avengers —
That from my hateful slayers they exact too
Pay for the dead slave — easy-managed hand's-work!

CHOROS.

Alas for mortal matters! Happy-fortuned, —
Why, any shade would turn them: if unhappy,
By throws the wetting sponge has spoiled the picture!
And more by much in mortals this I pity.
The being well-to-do —
Insatiate a desire of this
Born with all mortals is,
Nor any is there who
Wellbeing forces off, aroints
From roofs whereat a finger points,
"No more come in!" exclaiming. This man, too,
To take the city of Priamos did the celestials give,
And, honored by the god, he homeward comes;
But now if, of the former, he shall pay
The blood back, and, for those who ceased to live,
Dying, for deaths in turn new punishment he dooms —
Who, being mortal, would not pray
With an unmischievous
Daimon to have been born — who would not, hearing thus?

AGAMEMNON.

Ah me! I am struck — a right-aimed stroke within me!

CHOROS.

Silence! Who is it shouts "stroke" — "right-aimedly" a wounded one?

AGAMEMNON.

Ah me! indeed again, — a second, struck by!

CHOROS.

This work seems to me completed by this "Ah me" of the king's;
But we somehow may together share in solid counsellings.

CHOROS I.

I, in the first place, my opinion tell you:
— To cite the townsmen, by help-cry, to house here.

CHOROS II.

To me, it seems we ought to fall upon them
At quickest — prove the fact by sword fresh-flowing!

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CHOROS III.

And I, of such opinion the partaker,
Vote — to do something: not to wait — the main point!

CHOROS IV.

'T is plain to see: for they prelude as though of
A tyranny the signs they gave the city.

CHOROS V.

For we waste time; while they, — this waiting's glory
Treading to ground, — allow the hand no slumber.

CHOROS VI.

I know not — chancing on some plan — to tell it:
'T is for the doer to plan of the deed also.

CHOROS VII.

And I am such another: since I 'm schemeless
How to raise up again by words — a dead man!

CHOROS VIII.

What, and, protracting life, shall we give way thus
To the disgracers of our home, these rulers?

CHOROS IX.

Why, 't is unbearable: but to die is better:
For death than tyranny is the riper finish!

CHOROS X.

What, by the testifying "Ah me" of him,
Shall we prognosticate the man as perished?

CHOROS XI.

We must quite know ere speak these things concerning:
For to conjecture and "quite know" are two things.

CHOROS XII.

This same to praise I from all sides abound in —
Clearly to know, Atreides, what he 's doing!

KLUTAIMNESTRA.

Much having been before to purpose spoken,
The opposite to say I shall not shamed be:
For how should one, to enemies, — in semblance,
Friends, — enmity proposing, — sorrow's net-frame

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Enclose, a height superior to outleaping?
To me, indeed, this struggle of old — not mindless
Of an old victory — came: with time, I grant you!
I stand where I have struck, things once accomplished:
And so have done, — and this deny I shall not, —
As that his fate was nor to fly nor ward off.
A wrap-round with no outlet, as for fishes,
I fence about him — the rich woe of the garment:
I strike him twice, and in a double "Ah-me!"
He let his limbs go — *there!* And to him, fallen,
The third blow add I, giving — of Below-ground
Zeus, guardian of the dead — the votive favor.
Thus in the mind of him he rages, falling,
And blowing forth a brisk blood-spatter, strikes me
With the dark drop of slaughterous dew — rejoicing
No less than, at the god-given dewy-comfort,
The sown-stuff in its birth-throes from the calyx.
Since so these things are, — Argives, my revered here, —
Ye may rejoice — if ye rejoice: but I — boast!
If it were fit on corpse to pour libation,
That would be right — right over and above, too!
The cup of evils in the house he, having
Filled with such curses, himself coming drinks of.

CHOROS.

We wonder at thy tongue: since bold-mouthed truly
Is she who in such speech boasts o'er her husband!

KLUTAIMNESTRA.

Ye test me as I were a witless woman:
But I — with heart intrepid — to you knowers
Say (and thou — if thou wilt or praise or blame me,
Comes to the same) — this man is Agamemnon,
My husband, dead, the work of the right hand here,
Ay, of a just artificer: so things are.

CHOROS.

What evil, O woman, food or drink, earth-bred
Or sent from the flowing sea,
Of such having fed
Didst thou set on thee
This sacrifice
And popular cries
Of a curse on thy head?
Off thou hast thrown him, off hast cut
The man from the city: but —

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Off from the city thyself shalt be
Cut — to the citizens
A hate immense!

KLUTAIMNESTRA.

Now, indeed, thou adjudgest exile to me,
And citizens' hate, and to have popular curses:
Nothing of this against the man here bringing,
Who, no more awe-checked than as 't were a beast's fate, —
With sheep abundant in the well-fleeced graze-flocks, —
Sacrificed *his* child, — dearest fruit of travail
To me, — as song-spell against Threkian blowings.
Not *him* did it behove thee hence to banish
— Pollution's penalty? But hearing *my* deeds
Justicer rough thou art! Now, this I tell thee:
To threaten thus — me, one prepared to have thee
(On like conditions, thy hand conquering) o'er me
Rule: but if God the opposite ordain us,
Thou shalt learn — late taught, certes — to be modest.

CHOROS.

Greatly-intending thou art:
Much-mindful, too, hast thou cried
(Since thy mind, with its slaughter-outpouring part,
Is frantic) that over the eyes, a patch
Of blood — with blood to match —
Is plain for a pride!
Yet still, bereft of friends, thy fate
Is — blow with blow to expiate!

KLUTAIMNESTRA.

And this thou hearest — of my oaths, just warrant!
By who fulfilled things for my daughter, Justice,
Até, Erinus, — by whose help I slew him, —
Not mine the fancy — Fear will tread my palace
So long as on my hearth there burns a fire,
Aigisthos as before well-caring for me;
Since he to me is shield, no small, of boldness.
Here does he lie — outrager of this female,
Dainty of all the Chruseids under Ilion;
And she — the captive, the soothsayer also
And couchmate of this man, oracle-speaker,
Faithful bedfellow, — ay, the sailors' benches
They wore in common, nor unpunished did so,
Since he is — thus! While, as for her, — swan-fashion,
Her latest having chanted, — dying wailing

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She lies, — to him, a sweetheart: me she brought to
My bed's by-nicety, the whet of dalliance.

CHOROS.

Alas, that some
Fate would come
Upon us in quickness —
Neither much sickness
Neither bed-keeping —
And bear unended sleeping,
Now that subdued
Is our keeper, the kindest of mood!
Having borne, for a woman's sake, much strife —
By a woman he withered from life!
Ah me!
Law-breaking Helena who, one,
Hast many, so many souls undone
'Neath Troia! and now the consummated
Much-memorable curse
Hast thou made flower-forth, red
With the blood no rains disperse,
That which was then in the House —
Strife all-subduing, the woe of a spouse.

KLUTAIMNESTRA.

Nowise, of death the fate —
Burdened by these things — supplicate!
Nor on Helena turn thy wrath
As the man-destroyer, as "she who hath,
Being but one,
Many and many a soul undone
Of the men, the Danaoi" —
And wrought immense annoy!

CHOROS.

Daimon, who fallest
Upon this household and the double-raced
Tantalidai, a rule, minded like theirs displaced,
Thou rulest me with, now,
Whose heart thou gallest!
And on the body, like a hateful crow,
Stationed, all out of tune, his chant to chant
Doth something vaunt!

KLUTAIMNESTRA.

Now, of a truth, hast thou set upright
Thy mouth's opinion, —

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Naming the Sprite,
The triply-gross,
O'er the race that has dominion:
For through him it is that Eros
The carnage-licker
In the belly is bred: ere ended quite
Is the elder throe — new ichor!

CHOROS.

Certainly, great of might
And heavy of wrath, the Sprite
Thou tellest of, in the palace
(Woe, woe!)
— An evil tale of a fate
By Até's malice
Rendered insatiate!
Oh, oh, —
King, king, how shall I beweep thee?
From friendly soul what ever say?
Thou liest where webs of the spider o'ersweep thee;
In impious death, life breathing away.
O me — me!
This couch, not free!
By a slavish death subdued thou art,
From the hand, by the two-edged dart.

KLUTAIMNESTRA.

Thou boastest this deed to be mine:
But leave off styling me
"The Agamemnonian wife!"
For, showing himself in sign
Of the spouse of the corpse thou dost see,
Did the ancient bitter avenging-ghost
Of Atreus, savage host,
Pay the man here as price —
A full-grown for the young one's sacrifice.

CHOROS.

That no cause, indeed, of this killing art thou,
Who shall be witness-bearer?
How shall he bear it — how?
But the sire's avenging-ghost might be in the deed a sharer.
He is forced on and on
By the kin-born flowing of blood,
— Black Ares: to where, having gone,
He shall leave off, flowing done,

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At the frozen-child's-flesh food.
King, king, how shall I beweep thee!
From friendly soul what ever say?
Thou liest where webs of the spider o'ersweep thee,
In impious death, life breathing away.
Oh, me — me!
This couch not free!
By a slavish death subdued thou art,
From the hand, by the two-edged dart.

KLUTAIMNESTRA.

No death "unfit for the free"
Do I think this man's to be:
For did not himself a slavish curse
To his household decree?
But the scion of him, myself did nurse —
That much-bewailed Iphigeneia, he
Having done well by, — and as well, nor worse,
Been done to, — let him not in Haides loudly
Bear himself proudly!
Being by sword-destroying death amerced
For that sword's punishment himself inflicted first.

CHOROS.

I at a loss am left —
Of a feasible scheme of mind bereft —
Where I may turn: for the house is falling:
I fear the bloody crash of the rain
That ruins the roof as it bursts amain:
The warning-drop
Has come to a stop.
Destiny doth Justice whet
For other deed of hurt, on other whetstones yet.
Woe, earth, earth — would thou hadst taken *me*
Ere I saw the man I see,
On the pallet-bed
Of the silver-sided bath-vase, dead!
Who is it shall bury him, who
Sing his dirge? Can it be true
That *thou* wilt dare this same to do —
Having slain thy husband, thine own,
To make his funeral moan:
And for the soul of him, in place
Of his mighty deeds, a graceless grace
To wickedly institute? By whom
Shall the tale of praise o'er the tomb

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At the god-like man be sent —
From the truth of his mind as he toils intent?

KLUTAIMNESTRA.

It belongs not to thee to declare
This object of care!
By us did he fall — down there!
Did he die — down there! and down, no less,
We will bury him there, and not beneath
The wails of the household over his death:
But Iphigeneia, — with kindliness, —
His daughter, — as the case requires,
Facing him full, at the rapid-flowing
Passage of Groans shall — both hands throwing
Around him — kiss that kindest of sires!

CHOROS.

This blame comes in the place of blame:
Hard battle it is to judge each claim.
"He is borne away who bears away:
And the killer has all to pay."
And this remains while Zeus is remaining,
"The doer shall suffer in time" — for, such his ordaining.
Who may cast out of the House its cursed brood?
The race is to Até glued!

KLUTAIMNESTRA.

Thou hast gone into this oracle
With a true result. For me, then, — I will
— To the Daimon of the Pleisthenidai
Making an oath — with all these things comply
Hard as they are to bear. For the rest —
Going from out this House, a guest,
May he wear some other family
To naught, with the deaths of kin by kin!
And — keeping a little part of my goods —
Wholly am I contented in
Having expelled from the royal House
These frenzied moods
The mutually-murderous.

AIGISTHOS.

O light propitious of day justice-bringing!
I may say truly, now, that men's avengers,
The gods from high, of earth behold the sorrows —
Seeing, as I have, i' the spun robes of the Erinues,

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This man here lying, — sight to me how pleasant! —
His father's hands' contrivances repaying.
For Atreus, this land's lord, of this man father,
Thuestes, my own father — to speak clearly —
His brother too, — being i' the rule contested, —
Drove forth to exile from both town and household:
And, coming back, to the hearth turned, a suppliant,
Wretched Thuestes found the fate assured him
— Not to die, bloodying his paternal threshold
Just there: but host-wise this man's impious father
Atreus, soul-keenly more than kindly, — seeming
To joyous hold a flesh-day, — to my father
Served up a meal, the flesh of his own children.
The feet indeed and the hands' top divisions
He hid, high up and isolated sitting:
But, their unshowing parts in ignorance taking,
He forthwith eats food — as thou seest — perdition
To the race: and then, 'ware of the deed ill-omened,
He shrieked O! — falls back, vomiting, from the carnage,
And fate on the Pelopidai past bearing
He prays down — putting in his curse together
The kicking down o' the feast — that so might perish
The race of Pleisthenes entire: and thence is
That it is given thee to see this man prostrate.
And I was rightly of this slaughter stitch-man:
Since me, — being third from ten, — with my poor father
He drives out — being then a babe in swathe-bands:
But, grown up, back again has justice brought me:
And of this man I got hold — being without-doors —
Fitting together the whole scheme of ill-will.
So, sweet, in fine, even to die were to me,
Seeing, as I have, this man i' the toils of justice!

CHOROS.

Aigisthos, arrogance in ills I love not.
Dost thou say — willing, thou didst kill the man here,
And, alone, plot this lamentable slaughter?
I say — thy head in justice will escape not
The people's throwing — know that! — stones and curses!

AIGISTHOS.

Thou such things soundest — seated at the lower
Oarage to those who rule at the ship's mid-bench?
Thou shalt know, being old, how heavy is teaching
To one of the like age — bidden be modest!
But chains and old age and the pangs of fasting

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Stand out before all else in teaching, — prophets
At souls'-cure! Dost not, seeing aught, see this too?
Against goads kick not, lest tript-up thou suffer!

CHOROS.

Woman, thou, — of him coming new from battle
Houseguard — thy husband's bed the while disgracing, —
For the Army-leader didst thou plan this fate too?

AIGISTHOS.

These words too are of groans the prime-begetters!
Truly a tongue opposed to Orpheus hast thou:
For he led all things by his voice's grace-charm,
But thou, upstirring them by these wild yelpings,
Wilt lead them! Forced, thou wilt appear the tamer!

CHOROS.

So — thou shalt be my king then of the Argeians —
Who, not when for this man his fate thou plannedst,
Daredst to do this deed — thyself the slayer!

AIGISTHOS.

For, to deceive him was the wife's part, certes:
I was looked after — foe, ay, old-begotten!
But out of this man's wealth will I endeavor
To rule the citizens: and the no-man-minder
— Him will I heavily yoke — by no means trace-horse,
A corned-up colt! but that bad friend in darkness,
Famine its housemate, shall behold him gentle.

CHOROS.

Why then, this man here, from a coward spirit,
Didst not thou slay thyself? But, — helped, — a woman,
The country's pest, and that of gods o' the country,
Killed him! Orestes, where may he see light now?
That coming hither back, with gracious fortune,
Of both these he may be the all-conquering slayer?

AIGISTHOS.

But since this to do thou thinkest — and not talk — thou soon shalt know!
Up then, comrades dear! the proper thing to do — not distant this!

CHOROS.

Up then! hilt in hold, his sword let every one aright dispose!

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AIGISTHOS.

Ay, but I myself too, hilt in hold, do not refuse to die!

CHOROS.

Thou wilt die, thou say'st, to who accept it. We the chance demand!

KLUTAIMNESTRA.

Nowise, O belovedest of men, may we do other ills!
To have reaped away these, even, is a harvest much to me!
Go, both thou and these the old men, to the homes appointed each,
Ere ye suffer! It behoved one do these things just as we did:
And if of these troubles, there should be enough — we may assent
— By the Daimon's heavy heel unfortunately stricken ones!
So a woman's counsel hath it — if one judge it learning-worth.

AIGISTHOS.

But to think that these at me the idle tongue should thus o'er-bloom,
And throw out such words — the Daimon's power experimenting on —
And, of modest knowledge missing, — me, the ruler, . . .

CHOROS.

Ne'er may this befall Argeians — wicked man to fawn before!

AIGISTHOS.

Anyhow, in after-days, will I, yes, I, be at thee yet!

CHOROS.

Not if hither should the Daimon make Orestes straightway come!

AIGISTHOS.

O, I know, myself, that fugitives on hopes are pasture-fed!

CHOROS.

Do thy deed, get fat, defiling justice, since the power is thine!

AIGISTHOS.

Know that thou shalt give me satisfaction for this folly's sake!

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CHOROS.

Boast on, bearing thee audacious, like a cock his females by!

KLUTAIMNESTRA.

Have not thou respect for these same idle yelpings! I and thou
Will arrange it, ruling o'er this household excellently well.

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LA SAISIAZ

DEDICATED TO MRS. SUTHERLAND ORR.

I.

Good, to forgive;
Best, to forget!
Living, we fret;
Dying, we live.
Fretless and free,
Soul, clap thy pinion!
Earth have dominion,
Body, o'er thee!

II.

Wander at will,
Day after day, —
Wander away,
Wandering still —
Soul that canst soar!
Body may slumber:
Body shall cumber
Soul-flight no more.

III.

Waft of soul's wing!
What lies above?
Sunshine and Love,
Skyblue and Spring!
Body hides — where?
Ferns of all feather,
Mosses and heather,
Yours be the care!

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LA SAISIAZ.

A. E. S. SEPTEMBER 14, 1877.

DARED and done: at last I stand upon the summit, Dear and True!
Singly dared and done; the climbing both of us were bound to do.
Petty feat and yet prodigious: every side my glance was bent
O'er the grandeur and the beauty lavished through the whole ascent.
Ledge by ledge, out broke new marvels, now minute and now immense:
Earth's most exquisite disclosure, heaven's own God in evidence!
And no berry in its hiding, no blue space in its outspread,
Pleaded to escape my footstep, challenged my emerging head,
(As I climbed or paused from climbing, now o'erbranched by shrub and tree,
Now built round by rock and boulder, now at just a turn set free,
Stationed face to face with — Nature? rather with Infinitude,)
— No revealment of them all, as singly I my path pursued,
But a bitter touched its sweetness, for the thought stung "Even so
Both of us had loved and wondered just the same, five days ago!"
Five short days, sufficient hardly to entice, from out its den
Splintered in the slab, this pink perfection of the cyclamen;
Scarce enough to heal and coat with amber gum the sloe-tree's gash,
Bronze the clustered wilding apple, redden ripe the mountain-ash:
Yet of might to place between us — Oh the barrier! Yon Profound
Shrinks beside it, proves a pin-point: barrier this, without a bound!
Boundless though it be, I reach you: somehow seem to have you here
— Who are there. Yes, there you dwell now, plain the four low walls appear;
Those are vineyards, they enclose from; and the little spire which points
— That's Collonge, henceforth your dwelling. All the same, howe'er disjoints
Past from present, no less certain you are here, not there: have dared,

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Done the feat of mountain-climbing, — five days since, we both prepared
Daring, doing, arm in arm, if other help should haply fail.
For you asked, as forth we sallied to see sunset from the vale,
"Why not try for once the mountain, — take a foretaste, snatch by stealth
Sight and sound, some unconsidered fragment of the hoarded wealth?
Six weeks at its base, yet never once have we together won
Sight or sound by honest climbing: let us two have dared and done
Just so much of twilight journey as may prove to-morrow's jaunt
Not the only mode of wayfare — wheeled to reach the eagle's haunt!"
So, we turned from the low grass-path you were pleased to call "your own,"
Set our faces to the rose-bloom o'er the summit's front of stone
Where Salève obtains, from Jura and the sunken sun she hides,
Due return of blushing "Good Night," rosy as a borne-off bride's,
For his masculine "Good Morrow" when, with sunrise still in hold,
Gay he hails her, and, magnific, thrilled her black length burns to gold.
Up and up we went, how careless — nay, how joyous! All was new,
All was strange. "Call progress toilsome? that were just insulting you!
How the trees must temper noontide! Ah, the thicket's sudden break!
What will be the morning glory, when at dusk thus gleams the lake?
Light by light puts forth Geneva: what a land — and, of the land,
Can there be a lovelier station than this spot where now we stand?
Is it late, and wrong to linger? True, to-morrow makes amends.
Toilsome progress? child's play, call it — specially when one descends!
There, the dread descent is over — hardly our adventure, though!
Take the vale where late we left it, pace the grass-path, 'mine,' you know!
Proud completion of achievement!" And we paced it, praising still
That soft tread on velvet verdure as it wound through hill and hill;

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And at very end there met us, coming from Collonge, the pair
— All our people of the Chalet — two, enough and none to spare.
So, we made for home together, and we reached it as the stars
One by one came lamping — chiefly that prepotency of Mars —
And your last word was "I owe you this enjoyment!" — met with "Nay:
With yourself it rests to have a month of morrows like to-day!"
Then the meal, with talk and laughter, and the news of that rare nook
Yet untroubled by the tourist, touched on by no travel-book,
All the same — though latent — patent, hybrid birth of land and sea,
And (our travelled friend assured you) — if such miracle might be —
Comparable for completeness of both blessings — all around
Nature, and, inside her circle, safety from world's sight and sound —
Comparable to our Saisiaz. "Hold it fast and guard it well!
Go and see and vouch for certain, then come back and never tell
Living soul but us; and haply, prove our sky from cloud as clear,
There may we four meet, praise fortune just as now, another year!"

Thus you charged him on departure: not without the final charge,
"Mind to-morrow's early meeting! We must leave our journey marge
Ample for the wayside wonders: there's the stoppage at the inn
Three-parts up the mountain, where the hardships of the track begin;
There's the convent worth a visit; but, the triumph crowning all —
There's Salève's own platform facing glory which strikes greatness small,
— Blanc, supreme above his earth-brood, needles red and white and green,
Horns of silver, fangs of crystal set on edge in his demesne.
So, some three weeks since, we saw them: so, to-morrow we intend
You shall see them likewise; therefore Good Night till to-morrow, friend!"
Last, the nothings that extinguish embers of a vivid day:
"What might be the Marshal's next move, what Gambetta's counter-play?"

Till the landing on the staircase saw escape the latest spark:
"Sleep you well!" "Sleep but as well, you!" — lazy love
quenched, all was dark.

Nothing dark next day at sundawn! Up I rose and forth I
fared:
Took my plunge within the bath-pool, pacified the watch-dog
scared,
Saw proceed the transmutation — Jura's black to one gold
glow,
Trod your level path that let me drink the morning deep and
slow,
Reached the little quarry — ravage recompensed by shrub and
fern —
Till the overflowing ardors told me time was for return.
So, return I did, and gayly. But, for once, from no far mound
Waved salute a tall white figure. "Has her sleep been so pro-
found?
Foresight, rather, prudent saving strength for day's expendi-
ture!
Ay, the chamber-window's open: out and on the terrace,
sure!"

No, the terrace showed no figure, tall, white, leaning through
the wreaths,
Tangle-twine of leaf and bloom that intercept the air one
breathes,
Interpose between one's love and Nature's loving, hill and dale
Down to where the blue lake's wrinkle marks the river's inrush
pale
— Mazy Arve: whereon no vessel but goes sliding white and
plain,
Not a steamboat pants from harbor but one hears pulsate amain,
Past the city's congregated peace of homes and pomp of spires
— Man's mild protest that there 's something more than Nature,
man requires,
And that, useful as is Nature to attract the tourist's foot,
Quiet slow sure money-making proves the matter's very root, —
Need for body, — while the spirit also needs a comfort reached
By no help of lake or mountain, but the texts whence Calvin
preached.
"Here 's the veil withdrawn from landscape: up to Jura and
beyond,
All awaits us ranged and ready; yet she violates the bond,
Neither leans nor looks nor listens: why is this?" A turn of
eye
Took the whole sole answer, gave the undisputed reason "why!"

This dread way you had your summons! No premonitory touch,
As you talked and laughed ('t is told me) scarce a minute ere the clutch
Captured you in cold forever. Cold? nay, warm you were as life
When I raised you, while the others used, in passionate poor strife,
All the means that seemed to promise any aid, and all in vain.
Gone you were, and I shall never see that earnest face again
Grow transparent, grow transfigured with the sudden light that leapt,
At the first word's provocation, from the heart-deeps where it slept.
Therefore, paying piteous duty, what seemed You have we consigned
Peacefully to — what I think were, of all earth-beds, to your mind
Most the choice for quiet, yonder: low walls stop the vines' approach,
Lovingly Salève protects you; village-sports will ne'er encroach
On the stranger lady's silence, whom friends bore so kind and well
Thither "just for love's sake," — such their own word was: and who can tell?
You supposed that few or none had known and loved you in the world:
Maybe! flower that 's full-blown tempts the butterfly, not flower that 's furled.
But more learned sense unlocked you, loosed the sheath and let expand
Bud to bell and outspread flower-shape at the least warm touch of hand
— Maybe, throb of heart, beneath which — quickening farther than it knew —
Treasure oft was disembosomed, scent all strange and unguessed hue.
Disembosomed, re-embosomed, — must one memory suffice,
Prove I knew an Alpine-rose which all beside named Edelweiss?

Rare thing, red or white, you rest now: two days slumbered through; and since
One day more will see me rid of this same scene whereat I wince,
Tetchy at all sights and sounds and pettish at each idle charm
Proffered me who pace now singly where we two went arm in arm, —

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I have turned upon my weakness: asked, "And what, forsooth, prevents
That, this latest day allowed me, I fulfil of her intents
One she had the most at heart — that we should thus again survey
From Salève Mont Blanc together?" Therefore, — dared and done to-day
Climbing, — here I stand: but you — where?

If a spirit of the place
Broke the silence, bade me question, promised answer, — what disgrace
Did I stipulate "Provided answer suit my hopes, not fears!"
Would I shrink to learn my lifetime's limit — days, weeks, months or years?
Would I shirk assurance on each point whereat I can but guess —
"Does the soul survive the body? Is there God's self, no or yes?"
If I know my mood, 't were constant — come in whatsoe'er uncouth
Shape it should, nay, formidable — so the answer were but truth.

Well, and wherefore shall it daunt me, when 't is I myself am tasked,
When, by weakness weakness questioned, weakly answers — weakly asked?
Weakness never needs be falseness: truth is truth in each degree
— Thunder-pealed by God to Nature, whispered by my soul to me.
Nay, the weakness turns to strength and triumphs in a truth beyond:
"Mine is but man's truest answer — how were it did God respond?"
I shall no more dare to mimic such response in futile speech,
Pass off human lisp as echo of the sphere-song out of reach,
Than, — because it well may happen yonder, where the far snows blanch
Mute Mont Blanc, that who stands near them sees and hears an avalanche, —
I shall pick a clod and throw, — cry, "Such the sight and such the sound!
What though I nor see nor hear them? Others do, the proofs abound!"

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Can I make my eye an eagle's, sharpen ear to recognize
Sound o'er league and league of silence? Can I know, who but surmise?
If I dared no self-deception when, a week since, I and you
Walked and talked along the grass-path, passing lightly in review
What seemed hits and what seemed misses in a certain fence-play, — strife
Sundry minds of mark engaged in "On the Soul and Future Life," —
If I ventured estimating what was come of parried thrust,
Subtle stroke, and, rightly, wrongly, estimating could be just
— Just, though life so seemed abundant in the form which moved by mine,
I might well have played at feigning, fooling, — laughed "What need opine
Pleasure must succeed to pleasure, else past pleasure turns to pain,
And this first life claims a second, else I count its good no gain?" —
Much less have I heart to palter when the matter to decide
Now becomes "Was ending ending once and always, when you died?"
Did the face, the form I lifted as it lay, reveal the loss
Not alone of life but soul? A tribute to yon flowers and moss,
What of you remains beside? A memory! Easy to attest
"Certainly from out the world that one believes who knew her best
Such was good in her, such fair, which fair and good were great perchance
Had but fortune favored, bidden each shy faculty advance;
After all — who knows another? Only as I know, I speak."
So much of you lives within me while I live my year or week.
Then my fellow takes the tale up, not unwilling to aver
Duly in his turn, "I knew him best of all, as he knew her:
Such he was, and such he was not, and such other might have been
But that somehow every actor, somewhere in this earthly scene,
Fails." And so both memories dwindle, yours and mine together linked,
Till there is but left for comfort, when the last spark proves extinct,
This — that somewhere new existence led by men and women new
Possibly attains perfection coveted by me and you;
While ourselves, the only witness to what work our life evolved,

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Only to ourselves proposing problems proper to be solved
By ourselves alone, — who working ne'er shall know if work bear fruit
Others reap and garner, heedless how produced by stalk and root, —
We who, darkling, timed the day's birth, — struggling, testified to peace, —
Earned, by dint of failure, triumph, — we, creative thought, must cease
In created word, thought's echo, due to impulse long since sped!
Why repine? There 's ever some one lives although ourselves be dead!

Well, what signifies repugnance? Truth is truth howe'er it strike.
Fair or foul the lot apportioned life on earth, we bear alike.
Stalwart body idly yoked to stunted spirit, powers, that fain
Else would soar, condemned to grovel, groundlings through the fleshly chain, —
Help that hinders, hindrance proved but help disguised when all too late, —
Hindrance is the fact acknowledged, howsoe'er explained as Fate,
Fortune, Providence: we bear, own life a burden more or less.
Life thus owned unhappy, is there supplemental happiness
Possible and probable in life to come? or must we count
Life a curse and not a blessing, summed-up in its whole amount,
Help and hindrance, joy and sorrow?
Why should I want courage here?
I will ask and have an answer, — with no favor, with no fear, —
From myself. How much, how little, do I inwardly believe
True that controverted doctrine? Is it fact to which I cleave,
Is it fancy I but cherish, when I take upon my lips
Phrase the solemn Tuscan fashioned, and declare the soul's eclipse
Not the soul's extinction? take his "I believe and I declare —
Certain am I — from this life I pass into a better, there
Where that lady lives of whom enamored was my soul" — where this
Other lady, my companion dear and true, she also is?

I have questioned and am answered. Question, answer presuppose
Two points: that the thing itself which questions, answers, — *is* it knows;
As it also knows the thing perceived outside itself, — a force
Actual ere its own beginning, operative through its course,
Unaffected by its end, — that this thing likewise needs must be;

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Call this — God, then, call that — soul, and both — the only facts for me.
Prove them facts? that they o'erpass my power of proving, proves them such:
Fact it is I know I know not something which is fact as much.
What before caused all the causes, what effect of all effects
Haply follows, — these are fancy. Ask the rush if it suspects
Whence and how the stream which floats it had a rise, and where and how
Falls or flows on still! What answer makes the rush except that now
Certainly it floats and is, and, no less certain than itself,
Is the everyway external stream that now through shoal and shelf
Floats it onward, leaves it — maybe — wrecked at last, or lands on shore
There to root again and grow and flourish stable evermore.
— Maybe! mere surmise not knowledge: much conjecture styled belief,
What the rush conceives the stream means through the voyage blind and brief.
Why, because I doubtless am, shall I as doubtless be? "Because
God seems good and wise." Yet under this our life's apparent laws
Reigns a wrong which, righted once, would give quite other laws to life.
"He seems potent." Potent here, then: why are right and wrong at strife?
Has in life the wrong the better? Happily life ends so soon!
Right predominates in life? Then why two lives and double boon?
"Anyhow, we want it: wherefore want?" Because, without the want,
Life, now human, would be brutish: just that hope, however scant,
Makes the actual life worth leading; take the hope therein away,
All we have to do is surely not endure another day.
This life has its hopes for this life, hopes that promise joy: life done —
Out of all the hopes, how many had complete fulfilment? none.
"But the soul is not the body:" and the breath is not the flute;
Both together make the music: either marred and all is mute.
Truce to such old sad contention whence, according as we shape
Most of hope or most of fear, we issue in a half-escape:

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"We believe" is sighed. I take the cup of comfort proffered thus,
Taste and try each soft ingredient, sweet infusion, and discuss
What their blending may accomplish for the cure of doubt, till — slow,
Sorrowful, but how decided! needs must I o'erturn it — so!
Cause before, effect behind me — blanks! The midway point I am,
Caused, itself — itself efficient: in that narrow space must cram
All experience — out of which there crowds conjecture manifold,
But, as knowledge, this comes only — things may be as I behold,
Or may not be, but, without me and above me, things there are;
I myself am what I know not — ignorance which proves no bar
To the knowledge that I am, and, since I am, can recognize
What to me is pain and pleasure: this is sure, the rest — surmise.
If my fellows are or are not, what may please them and what pain, —
Mere surmise: my own experience — that is knowledge, once again!

I have lived, then, done and suffered, loved and hated, learnt and taught
This — there is no reconciling wisdom with a world distraught,
Goodness with triumphant evil, power with failure in the aim,
If — (to my own sense, remember! though none other feel the same!) —
If you bar me from assuming earth to be a pupil's place,
And life, time — with all their chances, changes — just probation-space,
Mine, for me. But those apparent other mortals — theirs, for them?
Knowledge stands on my experience: all outside its narrow hem,
Free surmise may sport and welcome! Pleasures, pains affect mankind
Just as they affect myself? Why, here 's my neighbor color-blind,
Eyes like mine to all appearance: "green as grass" do I affirm?
"Red as grass" he contradicts me; — which employs the proper term?
Were we two the earth's sole tenants, with no third for referee,
How should I distinguish? Just so, God must judge 'twixt man and me.
To each mortal peradventure earth becomes a new machine,

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Pain and pleasure no more tally in our sense than red and green;
Still, without what seems such mortal's pleasure, pain, my life were lost
— Life, my whole sole chance to prove — although at man's apparent cost —
What is beauteous and what ugly, right to strive for, right to shun,
Fit to help and fit to hinder, — prove my forces every one,
Good and evil, — learn life's lesson, hate of evil, love of good,
As 't is set me, understand so much as may be understood —
Solve the problem: "From thine apprehended scheme of things, deduce
Praise or blame of its contriver, shown a niggard or profuse
In each good or evil issue! nor miscalculate alike
Counting one the other in the final balance, which to strike,
Soul was born and life allotted: ay, the show of things unfurled
For thy summing-up and judgment, — thine, no other mortal's world!"

What though fancy scarce may grapple with the complex and immense
— "His own world for every mortal?" Postulate omnipotence!
Limit power, and simple grows the complex: shrunk to atom size,
That which loomed immense to fancy low before my reason lies, —
I survey it and pronounce it work like other work: success
Here and there, the workman's glory, — here and there, his shame no less,
Failure as conspicuous. Taunt not "Human work ape work divine?"
As the power, expect performance! God's be God's as mine is mine!
God whose power made man and made man's wants, and made, to meet those wants,
Heaven and earth which, through the body, prove the spirit's ministrants,
Excellently all, — did He lack power or was the will in fault
When He let blue heaven be shrouded o'er by vapors of the vault,
Gay earth drop her garlands shrivelled at the first infecting breath
Of the serpent pains which herald, swarming in, the dragon death?
What, no way but this that man may learn and lay to heart how rife

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Life were with delights would only death allow their taste to life?
Must the rose sigh "Pluck — I perish!" must the eve weep "Gaze — I fade!"
— Every sweet warn "'Ware my bitter!" every shine bid "Wait my shade"?
Can we love but on condition, that the thing we love must die?
Needs there groan a world in anguish just to teach us sympathy —
Multitudinously wretched that we, wretched too, may guess
What a preferable state were universal happiness?
Hardly do I so conceive the outcome of that power which went
To the making of the worm there in yon clod its tenement,
Any more than I distinguish aught of that which, wise and good,
Framed the leaf, its plain of pasture, dropped the dew, its fineless food.
Nay, were fancy fact, were earth and all it holds illusion mere,
Only a machine for teaching love and hate and hope and fear
To myself, the sole existence, single truth 'mid falsehood, — well!
If the harsh throes of the prelude die not off into the swell
Of that perfect piece they sting me to become a-strain for, — if
Roughness of the long rock-clamber lead not to the last of cliff,
First of level country where is sward my pilgrim-foot can prize, —
Plainlier! if this life's conception new life fail to realize, —
Though earth burst and proved a bubble glassing hues of hell, one huge
Reflex of the devil's doings — God's work by no subterfuge —
(So death's kindly touch informed me as it broke the glamour, gave
Soul and body both release from life's long nightmare in the grave) —
Still, — with no more Nature, no more Man as riddle to be read,
Only my own joys and sorrows now to reckon real instead, —
I must say — or choke in silence — "Howsoever came my fate,
Sorrow did and joy did nowise — life well weighed — preponderate."
By necessity ordained thus? I shall bear as best I can;
By a cause all-good, all-wise, all-potent? No, as I am man!
Such were God: and was it goodness that the good within my range
Or had evil in admixture or grew evil's self by change?
Wisdom — that becoming wise meant making slow and sure advance

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From a knowledge proved in error to acknowledged ignorance?
Power? 't is just the main assumption reason most revolts at:
power
Unavailing for bestowment on its creature of an hour,
Man, of so much proper action rightly aimed and reaching aim,
So much passion, — no defect there, no excess, but still the same, —
As what constitutes existence, pure perfection bright as brief
For yon worm, man's fellow-creature, on yon happier world — its leaf!
No, as I am man, I mourn the poverty I must impute:
Goodness, wisdom, power, all bounded, each a human attribute!

But, O world outspread beneath me! only for myself I speak,
Nowise dare to play the spokesman for my brothers strong and weak,
Full and empty, wise and foolish, good and bad, in every age,
Every clime, I turn my eyes from, as in one or other stage
Of a torture writhe they, Job-like couched on dung and crazed with blains
— Wherefore? whereto? ask the whirlwind what the dread voice thence explains!
I shall "vindicate no way of God's to man," nor stand apart,
"Laugh, be candid," while I watch it traversing the human heart!
Traversed heart must tell its story uncommented on: no less
Mine results in, "Only grant a second life; I acquiesce
In this present life as failure, count misfortune's worst assaults
Triumph, not defeat, assured that loss so much the more exalts
Gain about to be. For at what moment did I so advance
Near to knowledge as when frustrate of escape from ignorance?
Did not beauty prove most precious when its opposite obtained
Rule, and truth seem more than ever potent because falsehood reigned?
While for love — Oh how but, losing love, does whoso loves succeed
By the death-pang to the birth-throe — learning what is love indeed?
Only grant my soul may carry high through death her cup unspilled,
Brimming though it be with knowledge, life's loss drop by drop distilled,
I shall boast it mine — the balsam, bless each kindly wrench that wrung
From life's tree its inmost virtue, tapped the root whence pleasure sprung,

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Barked the bole, and broke the bough, and bruised the berry left all grace
Ashes in death s stern alembic, loosed elixir in its place!"

Witness, Dear and True, how little I was 'ware of — not your worth,
— That I knew, my heart assures me — but of what a shade on earth
Would the passage from my presence of the tall white figure throw
O'er the ways we walked together! Somewhat narrow, somewhat slow,
Used to seem the ways, the walking: narrow ways are well to tread
When there 's moss beneath the footstep, honeysuckle overhead:
Walking slow to beating bosom surest solace soonest gives,
Liberates the brain o'erloaded — best of all restoratives.
Nay, do I forget the open vast where soon or late converged
Ways though winding? — world-wide heaven-high sea where music slept or surged
As the angel had ascendant, and Beethoven's Titan mace
Smote the immense to storm, Mozart would by a finger's lifting chase?
Yes, I knew — but not with knowledge such as thrills me while I view
Yonder precinct which henceforward holds and hides the Dear and True.
Grant me (once again) assurance we shall each meet each some day,
Walk — but with how bold a footstep! on a way — but what a way!
— Worst were best, defeat were triumph, utter loss were utmost gain.
Can it be, and must, and will it?
Silence! Out of fact's domain,
Just surmise prepared to mutter hope, and also fear — dispute
Fact's inexorable ruling, "Outside fact, surmise be mute!"
Well!
Ay, well and best, if fact's self I may force the answer from!
'T is surmise I stop the mouth of! Not above in yonder dome
All a rapture with its rose-glow, — not around, where pile and peak
Strainingly await the sun's fall, — not beneath, where crickets creak,

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Birds assemble for their bedtime, soft the tree-top swell subsides, —
No, nor yet within my deepest sentient self the knowledge hides.
Aspiration, reminiscence, plausibilities of trust
— Now the ready "Man were wronged else," now the rash "and God unjust" —
None of these I need. Take thou, my soul, thy solitary stand,
Umpire to the champions Fancy, Reason, as on either hand
Amicable war they wage and play the foe in thy behoof!
Fancy thrust and Reason parry! Thine the prize who stand aloof!

FANCY.

I concede the thing refused: henceforth no certainty more plain
Than this mere surmise that after body dies soul lives again.
Two, the only facts acknowledged late, are now increased to three —
God is, and the soul is, and, as certain, after death shall be.
Put this third to use in life, the time for using fact!

REASON.

I do:
Find it promises advantage, coupled with the other two.
Life to come will be improvement on the life that 's now; destroy
Body's thwartings, there 's no longer screen betwixt soul and soul's joy.
Why should we expect new hindrance, novel tether? In this first
Life, I see the good of evil, why our world began at worst:
Since time means amelioration, tardily enough displayed,
Yet a mainly onward moving, never wholly retrograde.
We know more though we know little, we grow stronger though still weak,
Partly see though all too purblind, stammer though we cannot speak.
There is no such grudge in God as scared the ancient Greek, no fresh
Substitute of trap for drag-net, once a breakage in the mesh.
Dragons were, and serpents are, and blindworms will be: ne'er emerged
Any new-created Python for man's plague since earth was purged.
Failing proof, then, of invented trouble to replace the old,

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O'er this life the next presents advantage much and manifold:
Which advantage — in the absence of a fourth and farther fact
Now conceivably surmised, of harm to follow from the act —
I pronounce for man's obtaining at this moment. Why delay?
Is he happy? happiness will change: anticipate the day!
Is he sad? there 's ready refuge: of all sadness death's prompt cure!
Is he both, in mingled measure? cease a burden to endure!
Pains with sorry compensations, pleasures stinted in the doie,
Power that sinks and pettiness that soars, all halved and nothing whole,
Idle hopes that lure man onward, forced back by as idle fears —
What a load he stumbles under through his glad sad seventy years,
When a touch sets right the turmoil, lifts his spirit where, flesh-freed,
Knowledge shall be rightly named so, all that seems be truth indeed!
Grant his forces no accession, nay, no faculty's increase,
Only let what now exists continue, let him prove in peace
Power whereof the interrupted unperfected play enticed
Man through darkness, which to lighten any spark of hope sufficed, —
What shall then deter his dying out of darkness into light?
Death itself perchance, brief pain that 's pang, condensed and infinite?
But at worst, he needs must brave it one day, while, at best, he laughs —
Drops a drop within his chalice, sleep not death his science quaffs!
Any moment claims more courage, when, by crossing cold and gloom,
Manfully man quits discomfort, makes for the provided room
Where the old friends want their fellow, where the new acquaintance wait,
Probably for talk assembled, possibly to sup in state!
I affirm and reaffirm it therefore: only make as plain
As that man now lives, that, after dying, man will live again, —
Make as plain the absence, also, of a law to contravene
Voluntary passage from this life to that by change of scene, —
And I bid him — at suspicion of first cloud athwart his sky,
Flower's departure, frost's arrival — never hesitate, but die!

FANCY.

Then I double my concession: grant, along with new life sure,
This same law found lacking now: ordain that, whether rich or poor

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Present life is judged in aught man counts advantage — be it hope,
Be it fear that brightens, blackens most or least his horoscope, —
He, by absolute compulsion such as made him live at all,
Go on living to the fated end of life whate'er befall.
What though, as on earth he darkling grovels, man descry the sphere,
Next life's — call it, heaven of freedom, close above and crystal-clear?
He shall find — say, hell to punish who in aught curtails the term,
Fain would act the butterfly before he has played out the worm!
God, soul, earth, heaven, hell, — five facts now: what is to desiderate?

REASON.

Nothing! Henceforth man's existence bows to the monition "Wait!
Take the joys and bear the sorrows — neither with extreme concern!
Living here means nescience simply: 't is next life that helps to learn.
Shut those eyes, next life will open, — stop those ears, next life will teach
Hearing's office, — close those lips, next life will give the power of speech!
Or, if action more amuse thee than the passive attitude,
Bravely bustle through thy being, busy thee for ill or good,
Reap this life's success or failure! Soon shall things be unperplexed
And the right and wrong, now tangled, lie unravelled in the next."

FANCY.

Not so fast! Still more concession! not alone do I declare
Life must needs be borne, — I also will that man become aware
Life has worth incalculable, every moment that he spends
So much gain or loss for that next life which on this life depends.
Good, done here, be there rewarded, — evil, worked here, there amerced!
Six facts now, and all established, plain to man the last as first.

REASON.

There was good and evil, then, defined to man by this decree?
Was — for at its promulgation both alike have ceased to be.

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Prior to this last announcement, "Certainly as God exists,
As He made man's soul, as soul is quenchless by the deathly mists,
Yet is, all the same, forbidden premature escape from time
To eternity's provided purer air and brighter clime, —
Just so certainly depends it on the use to which man turns
Earth, the good or evil done there, whether after death he earns
Life eternal, — heaven, the phrase be, or eternal death, — say, hell.
As his deeds, so proves his portion, doing ill or doing well!"
—Prior to this last announcement, earth was man's probation-place:
Liberty of doing evil gave his doing good a grace;
Once lay down the law, with Nature's simple "Such effects succeed
Causes such, and heaven or hell depends upon man's earthly deed
Just as surely as depends the straight or else the crooked line
On his making point meet point or with or else without incline," —
Thenceforth neither good nor evil does man, doing what he must.
Lay but down that law as stringent "Wouldst thou live again, be just!"
As this other "Wouldst thou live now, regularly draw thy breath!
For, suspend the operation, straight law's breach results in death" —
And (provided always, man, addressed this mode, be sound and sane)
Prompt and absolute obedience, never doubt, will law obtain!
Tell not me "Look round us! nothing each side but acknowledged law,
Now styled God's — now, Nature's edict!" Where 's obedience without flaw
Paid to either? What 's the adage rife in man's mouth? Why, "The best
I both see and praise, the worst I follow" — which, despite professed
Seeing, praising, all the same he follows, since he disbelieves
In the heart of him that edict which for truth his head receives.
There 's evading and persuading and much making law amends
Somehow, there 's the nice distinction 'twixt fast foes and faulty friends,
— Any consequence except inevitable death when "Die,
Whoso breaks our law!" they publish, God and Nature equally.

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Law that 's kept or broken — subject to man's will and pleasure! Whence?
How comes law to bear eluding? Not because of impotence:
Certain laws exist already which to hear means to obey;
Therefore not without a purpose these man must, while those man may
Keep and, for the keeping, haply gain approval and reward.
Break through this last superstructure, all is empty air — no sward
Firm like my first fact to stand on, "God there is, and soul there is,"
And soul's earthly life-allotment: wherein, by hypothesis,
Soul is bound to pass probation, prove its powers, and exercise
Sense and thought on fact, and then, from fact educing fit surmise,
Ask itself, and of itself have solely answer, "Does the scope
Earth affords of fact to judge by warrant future fear or hope?"

Thus have we come back full circle: fancy's footsteps one by one
Go their round conducting reason to the point where they begun,
Left where we were left so lately, Dear and True! When, half a week
Since, we walked and talked and thus I told you, how suffused a cheek
You had turned me had I sudden brought the blush into the smile
By some word like "Idly argued! you know better all the while!"
Now, from me — Oh not a blush, but, how much more, a joyous glow,
Laugh triumphant, would it strike did your "Yes, better I do know"
Break, my warrant for assurance! which assurance may not be
If, supplanting hope, assurance needs must change this life to me.
So, I hope — no more than hope, but hope — no less than hope, because
I can fathom, by no plumb-line sunk in life's apparent laws,
How I may in any instance fix where change should meetly fall
Nor involve, by one revisal, abrogation of them all:
— Which again involves as utter change in life thus law-released,
Whence the good of goodness vanished when the ill of evil ceased.
Whereas, life and laws apparent reinstated, — all we know,

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All we know not, — o'er our heaven again cloud closes, until, lo —
Hope the arrowy, just as constant, comes to pierce its gloom, compelled
By a power and by a purpose which, if no one else beheld,
I behold in life, so — hope!

Sad summing-up of all to say!
Athanasius contra mundum, why should he hope more than they?
So are men made notwithstanding, such magnetic virtue darts
From each head their fancy haloes to their unresisting hearts!

Here I stand, methinks a stone's throw from yon village I this morn
Traversed for the sake of looking one last look at its forlorn
Tenement's ignoble fortune: through a crevice, plain its floor
Piled with provender for cattle, while a dung-heap blocked the door.
In that squalid Bossex, under that obscene red roof, arose,
Like a fiery flying serpent from its egg, a soul — Rousseau's.
Turn thence! Is it Diodati joins the glimmer of the lake?
There I plucked a leaf, one week since, — ivy, plucked for Byron's sake.
Famed unfortunates! And yet, because of that phosphoric fame
Swathing blackness' self with brightness till putridity looked flame,
All the world was witched: and wherefore? what could lie beneath, allure
Heart of man to let corruption serve man's head as cynosure?
Was the magic in the dictum "All that 's good is gone and past;
Bad and worse still grows the present, and the worst of all comes last:
Which believe — for I believe it"? So preached one his gospel-news;
While melodious moaned the other, "Dying day with dolphin-hues!
Storm, for loveliness and darkness like a woman's eye! Ye mounts
Where I climb to 'scape my fellow, and thou sea wherein he counts
Not one inch of vile dominion! What were your especial worth
Failed ye to enforce the maxim 'Of all objects found on earth
Man is meanest, much too honored when compared with — what by odds

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Beats him — any dog: so, let him go a-howling to his gods!'
Which believe — for I believe it!" Such the comfort man received
Sadly since perforce he must: for why? the famous bard believed!

Fame! Then, give me fame, a moment! As I gather at a glance
Human glory after glory vivifying yon expanse,
Let me grasp them altogether, hold on high and brandish well
Beacon-like above the rapt world ready, whether heaven or hell
Send the dazzling summons earthward, to submit itself the same,
Take on trust the hope or else despair flashed full on face by — Fame!
Thanks, thou pine-tree of Makistos, wide thy giant torch I wave!
Know ye whence I plucked the pillar, late with sky for architrave?
This the trunk, the central solid Knowledge, kindled core, began
Tugging earth-deeps, trying heaven-heights, rooted yonder at Lausanne.
This which flits and spits, the aspic, — sparkles in and out the boughs
Now, and now condensed, the python, coiling round and round allows
Scarce the bole its due effulgence, dulled by flake on flake of Wit —
Laughter so bejewels Learning, — what but Ferney nourished it?
Nay, nor fear — since every resin feeds the flame — that I dispense
With yon Bossex terebinth-tree's all-explosive Eloquence:
No, be sure! nor, any more than thy resplendency, Jean-Jacques,
Dare I want thine, Diodati! What though monkeys and macaques
Gibber "Byron"? Byron's ivy rears a branch beyond the crew,
Green forever, no deciduous trash macaques and monkeys chew!
As Rousseau, then, eloquent, as Byron prime in poet's power,—
Detonations, fulgurations, smiles — the rainbow, tears — the shower, —
Lo, I lift the corruscating marvel — Fame! and, famed, declare
— Learned for the nonce as Gibbon, witty as wit's self Voltaire . . .
O the sorriest of conclusions to whatever man of sense
'Mid the millions stands the unit, takes no flare for evidence!
Yet the millions have their portion, live their calm or troublous day.
Find significance in fireworks: so, by help of mine, they may

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Confidently lay to heart and lock in head their life-long — this:
"He there with the brand flamboyant, broad o'er night's forlorn
abyss,
Crowned by prose and verse; and wielding, with Wit's bauble,
Learning's rod" . . .
Well? Why, he at least believed in Soul, was very sure of God!

So the poor smile played, that evening: pallid smile long since
extinct
Here in London's mid-November! Not so loosely thoughts were
linked,
Six weeks since as I, descending in the sunset from Salève,
Found the chain, I seemed to forge there, flawless till it reached
your grave, —
Not so filmy was the texture, but I bore it in my breast
Safe thus far. And since I found a something in me would not
rest
Till I, link by link, unravelled any tangle of the chain,
— Here it lies, for much or little! I have lived all o'er again
That last pregnant hour: I saved it, just as I could save a root
Disinterred for reinterment when the time best helps to shoot.
Life is stocked with germs of torpid life; but may I never wake
Those of mine whose resurrection could not be without earth-
quake!
Rest all such, unraised forever! Be this, sad yet sweet, the sole
Memory evoked from slumber! Least part this: then what
the whole?

NOVEMBER 9, 1877.

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THE TWO POETS OF CROISIC

Such a starved bank of moss
  Till, that May-morn,
Blue ran the flash across:
  Violets were born!

Sky — what a scowl of cloud
  Till, near and far,
Ray on ray split the shroud:
  Splendid, a star!

World — how it walled about
  Life with disgrace
Till God's own smile came out:
  That was thy face!

I.

"Fame!" Yes, I said it and you read it. First,
  Praise the good log-fire! Winter howls without.
Crowd closer, let us! Ha, the secret nursed
  Inside yon hollow, crusted roundabout
With copper where the clamp was, — how the burst
  Vindicates flame the stealthy feeder! Spout
Thy splendidest — a minute and no more?
So soon again all sobered as before?

II.

Nay, for I need to see your face! One stroke
  Adroitly dealt, and lo, the pomp revealed!
Fire in his pandemonium, heart of oak
  Palatial, where he wrought the works concealed
Beneath the solid-seeming roof I broke,
  As redly up and out and off they reeled
Like disconcerted imps, those thousand sparks
From fire's slow tunnelling of vaults and arcs!

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III.

Up, out, and off, see! Were you never used, —
You now, in childish days or rather nights, —
As I was, to watch sparks fly? not amused
By that old nurse-taught game which gave the sprites
Each one his title and career, — confused
Belief 't was all long over with the flights
From earth to heaven of hero, sage, and bard,
And bade them once more strive for Fame's award?

IV.

New long bright life! and happy chance befell —
That I know — when some prematurely lost
Child of disaster bore away the bell
From some too-pampered son of fortune, crossed
Never before my chimney broke the spell!
Octogenarian Keats gave up the ghost,
While — never mind Who was it cumbered earth —
Sank stifled, span-long brightness, in the birth.

V.

Well, try a variation of the game!
Our log is old ship-timber, broken bulk.
There 's sea-brine spirits up the brimstone flame,
That crimson-curly spiral proves the hulk
Was saturate with — ask the chloride's name
From somebody who knows! I shall not sulk
If yonder greenish tonguelet licked from brass
Its life, I thought was fed on copperas.

VI.

Anyhow, there they flutter! What may be
The style and prowess of that purple one?
Who is the hero other eyes shall see
Than yours and mine? That yellow, deep to dun —
Conjecture how the sage glows, whom not we
But those unborn are to get warmth by! Son
O' the coal, — as Job and Hebrew name a spark, —
What bard, in thy red soaring, scares the dark?

VII.

Oh and the lesser lights, the dearer still
That they elude a vulgar eye, give ours
The glimpse repaying astronomic skill
Which searched sky deeper, passed those patent powers

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Constellate proudly, — swords, scrolls, harps, that fill
The vulgar eye to surfeit, — found best flowers
Hid deepest in the dark, — named unplucked grace
Of soul, ungathered beauty, form or face!

VIII.

Up with thee, mouldering ash men never knew,
But I know! flash thou forth, and figure bold,
Calm and columnar as yon flame I view!
Oh and I bid thee, — to whom fortune doled
Scantly all other gifts out — bicker blue,
Beauty for all to see, zinc's uncontrolled
Flake-brilliance! Not my fault if these were shown,
Grandeur and beauty both, to me alone.

IX.

No! as the first was boy's play, this proves mere
Stripling's amusement: manhood's sport be grave!
Choose rather sparkles quenched in mid career,
Their boldness and their brightness could not save
(In some old night of time on some lone drear
Sea-coast, monopolized by crag or cave)
— Save from ignoble exit into smoke,
Silence, oblivion, all death-damps that choke!

X.

Launched by our ship-wood, float we, once adrift,
In fancy to that land-strip waters wash,
We both know well! Where uncouth tribes made shift
Long since to just keep life in, billows dash
Nigh over folk who shudder at each lift
Of the old tyrant tempest's whirlwind-lash
Though they have built the serviceable town
Tempests but tease now, billows drench, not drown.

XI.

Croisic, the spit of sandy rock which juts
Spitefully northward, bears nor tree nor shrub
To tempt the ocean, show what Guérande shuts
Behind her, past wild Batz whose Saxons grub
The ground for crystals grown where ocean gluts
Their promontory's breadth with salt: all stub
Of rock and stretch of sand, the land's last strife
To rescue a poor remnant for dear life.

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XII.

And what life! Here was, from the world to choose,
The Druids' chosen chief of homes: they reared
— Only their women, — 'mid the slush and ooze
Of yon low islet, — to their sun, revered
In strange stone guise, — a temple. May-dawn dews
Saw the old structure levelled; when there peered
May's earliest eve-star, high and wide once more
Up towered the new pile perfect as before:

XIII.

Seeing that priestesses — and all were such —
Unbuilt and then rebuilt it every May,
Each alike helping — well, if not too much!
For, 'mid their eagerness to outstrip day
And get work done, if any loosed her clutch
And let a single stone drop, straight a prey
Herself fell, torn to pieces, limb from limb,
By sisters in full chorus glad and grim.

XIV.

And still so much remains of that gray cult,
That even now, of nights, do women steal
To the sole Menhir standing, and insult
The antagonistic church-spire by appeal
To power discrowned in vain, since each adult
Believes the gruesome thing she clasps may heal
Whatever plague no priestly help can cure:
Kiss but the cold stone, the event is sure!

XV.

Nay, more: on May-morns, that primeval rite
Of temple-building, with its punishment
For rash precipitation, lingers, spite
Of all remonstrance; vainly are they shent,
Those girls who form a ring and, dressed in white,
Dance round it, till some sister's strength be spent:
Touch but the Menhir, straight the rest turn roughs
From gentles, fall on her with fisticuffs.

XVI.

Oh and, for their part, boys from door to door
Sing unintelligible words to tunes
As obsolete: "scraps of Druidic lore,"
Sigh scholars, as each pale man importunes

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Vainly the mumbling to speak plain once more.
Enough of this old worship, rounds and runes!
They serve my purpose, which is but to show
Croisic to-day and Croisic long ago.

XVII.

What have we sailed to see, then, wafted there
By fancy from the log that ends its days
Of much adventure 'neath skies foul or fair,
On waters rough or smooth, in this good blaze
We two crouch round so closely, bidding care
Keep outside with the snow-storm? Something says
"Fit time for story-telling!" I begin —
Why not at Croisic, port we first put in?

XVIII.

Anywhere serves: for point me out the place
Wherever man has made himself a home,
And there I find the story of our race
In little, just at Croisic as at Rome.
What matters the degree? the kind I trace.
Druids their temple, Christians have their dome:
So with mankind; and Croisic, I'll engage,
With Rome yields sort for sort, in age for age.

XIX.

No doubt, men vastly differ: and we need
Some strange exceptional benevolence
Of nature's sunshine to develop seed
So well, in the less-favored clime, that thence
We may discern how shrub means tree indeed
Though dwarfed till scarcely shrub in evidence.
Man in the ice-house or the hot-house ranks
With beasts or gods: stove-forced, give warmth the thanks!

XX.

While, is there any ice-checked? Such shall learn
I am thankworthy, who propose to slake
His thirst for tasting how it feels to turn
Cedar from hyssop-on-the-wall. I wake
No memories of what is harsh and stern
In ancient Croisic-nature, much less rake
The ashes of her last warmth till out leaps
Live Hervé Riel, the single spark she keeps.

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XXI.

Take these two, see, each outbreak, — spirt and spirt
Of fire from our brave billet's either edge
Which call maternal Croisic ocean-girt! —
These two shall thoroughly redeem my pledge.
One flames fierce gules, its feebler rival — vert,
Heralds would tell you: heroes, I allege,
They both were: soldiers, sailors, statesmen, priests,
Lawyers, physicians — guess what gods or beasts!

XXII.

None of them all, but — poets, if you please!
"What, even there, endowed with knack of rhyme,
Did two among the aborigines
Of that rough region pass the ungracious time
Suiting, to rumble-tumble of the sea's,
The songs forbidden a serener clime?
Or had they universal audience — that's
To say, the folk of Croisic, ay, and Batz?"

XXIII.

Open your ears! Each poet in his day
Had such a mighty moment of success
As pinnacled him straight, in full display,
For the whole world to worship — nothing less!
Was not the whole polite world Paris, pray?
And did not Paris, for one moment — yes,
Worship these poet-flames, our red and green,
One at a time, a century between?

XXIV.

And yet you never heard their names! Assist,
Clio, Historic Muse, while I record
Great deeds! Let fact, not fancy, break the mist
And bid each sun emerge, in turn play lord
Of day, one moment! Hear the annalist
Tell a strange story, true to the least word!
At Croisic, sixteen hundred years and ten
Since Christ, forth flamed yon liquid ruby, then.

XXV.

Know him henceforth as René Gentilhomme
— Appropriate appellation! noble birth
And knightly blazon, the device wherefrom
Was "Better do than say"! In Croisic's dearth

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Why prison his career while Christendom
Lay open to reward acknowledged worth?
He therefore left it at the proper age
And got to be the Prince of Condé's page.

XXVI.

Which Prince of Condé, whom men called "The Duke,"
— Failing the king, his cousin, of an heir,
(As one might hold would hap, without rebuke,
Since Anne of Austria, all the world was 'ware,
Twenty-three years long sterile, scarce could look
For issue) — failing Louis of so rare
A godsend, it was natural the Prince
Should hear men call him "Next King" too, nor wince.

XXVII.

Now, as this reasonable hope, by growth
Of years, nay, tens of years, looked plump almost
To bursting, — would the brothers, childless both,
Louis and Gaston, give but up the ghost —
Condé, called "Duke" and "Next King," nothing loth
Awaited his appointment to the post,
And wiled away the time, as best he might,
Till Providence should settle things aright.

XXVIII.

So, at a certain pleasure-house, withdrawn
From cities where a whisper breeds offence,
He sat him down to watch the streak of dawn
Testify to first stir of Providence;
And, since dull country life makes courtiers yawn,
There wanted not a poet to dispense
Song's remedy for spleen-fits all and some,
Which poet was Page René Gentilhomme.

XXIX.

A poet born and bred, his very sire
A poet also, author of a piece
Printed and published, "Ladies — their attire":
Therefore the son, just born at his decease,
Was bound to keep alive the sacred fire,
And kept it, yielding moderate increase
Of songs and sonnets, madrigals, and much
Rhyming thought poetry and praised as such.

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XXX.

Rubbish unutterable (bear in mind!)
Rubbish not wholly without value, though,
Being to compliment the Duke designed
And bring the complimenter credit so, —
Pleasure with profit happily combined.
Thus René Gentilhomme rhymed, rhymed till — lo,
This happened, as he sat in an alcove
Elaborating rhyme for "love" — *not* "dove."

XXXI.

He was alone: silence and solitude
Befit the votary of the Muse. Around,
Nature — not our new picturesque and rude,
But trim tree-cinctured stately garden-ground —
Breathed polish and politeness. All-imbued
With these, he sat absorbed in one profound
Excogitation, "Were it best to hint
Or boldly boast 'She loves me — Araminte'?"

XXXII.

When suddenly flashed lightning, searing sight
Almost, so close to eyes; then, quick on flash,
Followed the thunder, splitting earth downright
Where René sat a-rhyming: with huge crash
Of marble into atoms infinite —
Marble which, stately, dared the world to dash
The stone-thing proud, high-pillared, from its place:
One flash, and dust was all that lay at base.

XXXIII.

So, when the horrible confusion loosed
Its wrappage round his senses, and, with breath,
Seeing and hearing by degrees induced
Conviction what he felt was life, not death —
His fluttered faculties came back to roost
One after one, as fowls do: ay, beneath,
About his very feet there, lay in dust
Earthly presumption paid by heaven's disgust.

XXXIV.

For, what might be the thunder-smitten thing
But, pillared high and proud, in marble guise,
A ducal crown — which meant "Now Duke: Next, King"?
Since such the Prince was, not in his own eyes

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Alone, but all the world's. Pebble from sling
Prostrates a giant; so can pulverize
Marble pretension — how much more, make moult
A peacock-prince his plume — God's thunderbolt!

XXXV.

That was enough for René, that first fact
Thus flashed into him. Up he looked: all blue
And bright the sky above; earth firm, compact
Beneath his footing, lay apparent too;
Opposite stood the pillar: nothing lacked
There, but the Duke's crown: see, its fragments strew
The earth, — about his feet lie atoms fine
Where he sat nursing late his fourteenth line!

XXXVI.

So, for the moment, all the universe
Being abolished, all 'twixt God and him, —
Earth's praise or blame, its blessing or its curse,
Of one and the same value, — to the brim
Flooded with truth for better or for worse, —
He pounces on the writing-paper, prim
Keeping its place on table: not a dint
Nor speck had damaged "Ode to Araminte."

XXXVII.

And over the neat crowquill calligraph
His pen goes blotting, blurring, as an ox
Tramples a flower-bed in a garden, — laugh
You may! — so does not he, whose quick heart knocks
Audibly at his breast: an epitaph
On earth's break-up, amid the falling rocks,
He might be penning in a wild dismay,
Caught with his work half-done on Judgment Day.

XXXVIII.

And what is it so terribly he pens,
Ruining "Cupid, Venus, wile and smile,
Hearts, darts," and all his day's *divinior mens*
Judged necessary to a perfect style?
Little recks René, with a breast to cleanse,
Of Rhadamanthine law that reigned erewhile:
Brimful of truth, truth's outburst will convince
(Style or no style) who bears truth's brunt — the Prince.

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XXXIX.

"Condé, called 'Duke,' be called just 'Duke,' not more,
To life's end! 'Next King' thou forsooth wilt be?
Ay, when this bauble, as it decked before.
Thy pillar, shall again, for France to see,
Take its proud station there! Let France adore
No longer an illusive mock-sun — thee —
But keep her homage for Sol's self, about
To rise and put pretenders to the rout!

XL.

"What? France so God-abandoned that her root
Regal, though many a Spring it gave no sign,
Lacks power to make the bole, now branchless, shoot
Greenly as ever? Nature, though benign,
Thwarts ever the ambitious and astute.
In store for such is punishment condign:
Sure as thy Duke's crown to the earth was hurled,
So sure, next year, a Dauphin glads the world!"

XLI.

Which penned — some forty lines to this effect —
Our René folds his paper, marches brave
Back to the mansion, luminous, erect,
Triumphant, an emancipated slave.
There stands the Prince. "How now? My Duke's-crown wrecked?
What may this mean?" The answer René gave
Was — handing him the verses, with the due
Incline of body: "Sir, God's word to you!"

XLII.

The Prince read, paled, was silent; all around,
The courtier-company, to whom he passed
The paper, read, in equal silence bound.
René grew also by degrees aghast
At his own fit of courage — palely found
Way of retreat from that pale presence: classed
Once more among the cony-kind. "Oh, son,
It is a feeble folk!" saith Solomon.

XLIII.

Vainly he apprehended evil: since,
When, at the year's end, even as foretold,

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Forth came the Dauphin who discrowned the Prince
Of that long-craved mere visionary gold,
'T was no fit time for envy to evince
Malice, be sure! The timidest grew bold:
Of all that courtier-company not one
But left the semblance for the actual sun.

XLIV.

And all sorts and conditions that stood by
At René's burning moment, bright escape
Of soul, bore witness to the prophecy.
Which witness took the customary shape
Of verse; a score of poets in full cry
Hailed the inspired one. Nantes and Tours agape,
Soon Paris caught the infection; gaining strength,
How could it fail to reach the Court at length?

XLV.

"O poet!" smiled King Louis, "and besides,
O prophet! Sure, by miracle announced,
My babe will prove a prodigy. Who chides
Henceforth the unchilded monarch shall be trounced
For irreligion: since the fool derides
Plain miracle by which this prophet pounced
Exactly on the moment I should lift
Like Simeon, in my arms, a babe, 'God's gift!'

XLVI.

"So call the boy! and call this bard and seer
By a new title! him I raise to rank
Of 'Royal Poet:' poet without peer!
Whose fellows only have themselves to thank
If humbly they must follow in the rear
My René. He 's the master: they must clank
Their chains of song, confessed his slaves; for why?
They poetize, while he can prophesy!"

XLVII.

So said, so done; our René rose august,
"The Royal Poet;" straightway put in type
His poem-prophecy, and (fair and just
Procedure) added, — now that time was ripe
For proving friends did well his word to trust, —
Those attestations, tuned to lyre or pipe,
Which friends broke out with when he dared foretell
The Dauphin's birth: friends trusted, and did well.

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XLVIII.

Moreover he got painted by Du Pré,
Engraved by Daret also; and prefixed
The portrait to his book: a crown of bay
Circled his brows, with rose and myrtle mixed;
And Latin verses, lovely in their way,
Described him as "the biforked hill betwixt:
Since he hath scaled Parnassus at one jump,
Joining the Delphic quill and Getic trump."

XLIX.

Whereof came . . . What, it lasts, our spirt, thus long
— The red fire? That 's the reason must excuse
My letting flicker René's prophet-song
No longer; for its pertinacious hues
Must fade before its fellow joins the throng
Of sparks departed up the chimney, dues
To dark oblivion. At the word, it winks,
Rallies, relapses, dwindles, deathward sinks.

L.

So does our poet. All this burst of fame,
Fury of favor, Royal Poetship,
Prophetship, book, verse, picture — thereof came
— Nothing! That 's why I would not let outstrip
Red his green rival flamelet: just the same
Ending in smoke waits both! In vain we rip
The past, no further faintest trace remains
Of René to reward our pious pains.

LI.

Somebody saw a portrait framed and glazed
At Croisic. "Who may be this glorified
Mortal unheard-of hitherto?" amazed
That person asked the owner by his side,
Who proved as ignorant. The question raised
Provoked inquiry; key by key was tried
On Croisic's portrait-puzzle, till back flew
The wards at one key's touch, which key was — Who?

LII.

The other famous poet! Wait thy turn,
Thou green, our red's competitor! Enough
Just now to note 't was he that itched to learn
(A hundred years ago) how fate could puff

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Heaven-high (a hundred years before), then spurn
To suds so big a bubble in some huff:
Since green too found red's portrait, — having heard
Hitherto of red's rare self not one word.

LIII.

And he with zeal addressed him to the task
Of hunting out, by all and any means,
— Who might the brilliant bard be, born to bask
Butterfly-like in shine which kings and queens
And baby-dauphins shed? Much need to ask!
Is fame so fickle that what perks and preens
The eyed wing, one imperial minute, dips
Next sudden moment into blind eclipse?

LIV.

After a vast expenditure of pains,
Our second poet found the prize he sought:
Urged in his search by something that restrains
From undue triumph famed ones who have fought,
Or simply, poetizing, taxed their brains:
Something that tells such — dear is triumph bought
If it means only basking in the midst
Of fame's brief sunshine, as thou, René, didst.

LV.

For, what did searching find at last but this?
Quoth somebody, "I somehow somewhere seem
To think I heard one old De Chevaye is
Or was possessed of René's works!" which gleam
Of light from out the dark proved not amiss
To track, by correspondence on the theme;
And soon the twilight broadened into day,
For thus to question answered De Chevaye.

LVI.

"True it is, I did once possess the works
You want account of — works — to call them so, —
Comprised in one small book: the volume lurks
(Some fifty leaves *in duodecimo*)
'Neath certain ashes which my soul it irks
Still to remember, because long ago
That and my other rare shelf-occupants
Perished by burning of my house at Nantes.

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LVII.

"Yet of that book one strange particular
Still stays in mind with me" — and thereupon
Followed the story. "Few the poems are;
The book was two-thirds filled up with this one,
And sundry witnesses from near and far
That here at least was prophesying done
By prophet, so as to preclude all doubt,
Before the thing he prophesied about."

LVIII.

That 's all he knew, and all the poet learned,
And all that you and I are like to hear
Of René; since not only book is burned
But memory extinguished, — nay, I fear,
Portrait is gone too: nowhere I discerned
A trace of it at Croisic. "Must a tear
Needs fall for that?" you smile. "How fortune fares
With such a mediocrity, who cares?"

LIX.

Well, I care — intimately care to have
Experience how a human creature felt
In after-life, who bore the burden grave
Of certainly believing God had dealt
For once directly with him: did not rave
— A maniac, did not find his reason melt
— An idiot, but went on, in peace or strife,
The world's way, lived an ordinary life.

LX.

How many problems that one fact would solve!
An ordinary soul, no more, no less,
About whose life earth's common sights revolve,
On whom is brought to bear, by thunder-stress,
This fact — God tasks him, and will not absolve
Task's negligent performer! Can you guess
How such a soul — the task performed to point —
Goes back to life nor finds things out of joint?

LXI.

Does he stand stock-like henceforth? or proceed
Dizzily, yet with course straightforward still,
Down-trampling vulgar hindrance? — as the reed
Is crushed beneath its tramp when that blind will

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Hatched in some old-world beast's brain bids it speed
Where the sun wants brute-presence to fulfil
Life's purpose in a new far zone, ere ice
Enwomb the pasture-tract its fortalice.

LXII.

I think no such direct plain truth consists
With actual sense and thought and what they take
To be the solid walls of life: mere mists —
How such would, at that truth's first piercing, break
Into the nullity they are! — slight lists
Wherein the puppet-champions wage, for sake
Of some mock-mistress, mimic war: laid low
At trumpet-blast, there 's shown the world, one foe!

LXIII.

No, we must play the pageant out, observe
The tourney-regulations, and regard
Success — to meet the blunted spear nor swerve,
Failure — to break no bones yet fall on sward;
Must prove we have — not courage? well then — nerve!
And, at the day's end, boast the crown's award —
Be warranted as promising to wield
Weapons, no sham, in a true battlefield.

LXIV.

Meantime, our simulated thunderclaps
Which tell us counterfeited truths — these same
Are — sound, when music storms the soul, perhaps?
— Sight, beauty, every dart of every aim
That touches just, then seems, by strange relapse,
To fall effectless from the soul it came
As if to fix its own, but simply smote
And startled to vague beauty more remote?

LXV.

So do we gain enough — yet not too much —
Acquaintance with that outer element
Wherein there 's operation (call it such!)
Quite of another kind than we the pent
On earth are proper to receive. Our hutch
Lights up at the least chink: let roof be rent —
How inmates huddle, blinded at first spasm,
Cognizant of the sun's self through the chasm!

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LXVI.

Therefore, who knows if this our René's quick
Subsidence from as sudden noise and glare
Into oblivion was impolitic?
No doubt his soul became at once aware
That, after prophecy, the rhyming-trick
Is poor employment: human praises scare
Rather than soothe ears all a-tingle yet
With tones few hear and live, but none forget.

LXVII.

There 's our first famous poet! Step thou forth
Second consummate songster! See, the tongue
Of fire that typifies thee, owns thy worth
In yellow, purple mixed its green among,
No pure and simple resin from the North,
But composite with virtues that belong
To Southern culture! Love not more than hate
Helped to a blaze . . . But I anticipate.

LXVIII.

Prepare to witness a combustion rich
And riotously splendid, far beyond
Poor René's lambent little streamer which
Only played candle to a Court grown fond
By baby-birth: this soared to such a pitch,
Alternately such colors doffed and donned,
That when I say it dazzled Paris — please
Know that it brought Voltaire upon his knees!

LXIX.

Who did it, was a dapper gentleman,
Paul Desforges Maillard, Croisickese by birth,
Whose birth that century ended which began
By similar bestowment on our earth
Of the aforesaid René. Cease to scan
The ways of Providence! See Croisic's dearth —
Not Paris in its plenitude — suffice
To furnish France with her best poet twice!

LXX.

Till he was thirty years of age, the vein
Poetic yielded rhyme by drops and spirts:
In verses of society had lain
His talent chiefly; but the Muse asserts

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Privilege most by treating with disdain
Epics the bard mouths out, or odes he blurts
Spasmodically forth. Have people time
And patience nowadays for thought in rhyme?

LXXI.

So, his achievements were the quatrain's inch
Of homage, or at most the sonnet's ell
Of admiration: welded lines with clinch
Of ending word and word, to every belle
In Croisic's bounds; these, brisk as any finch,
He twittered till his fame had reached as well
Guérande as Batz; but there fame stopped, for — curse
On fortune — outside lay the universe!

LXXII.

That 's Paris. Well, — why not break bounds, and send
Song onward till it echo at the gates
Of Paris whither all ambitions tend,
And end too, seeing that success there sates
The soul which hungers most for fame? Why spend
A minute in deciding, while, by Fate's
Decree, there happens to be just the prize
Proposed there, suiting souls that poetize?

LXXIII.

A prize indeed, the Academy's own self
Proposes to what bard shall best indite
A piece describing how, through shoal and shelf,
The Art of Navigation, steered aright,
Has, in our last king's reign, — the lucky elf, —
Reached, one may say, Perfection's haven quite,
And there cast anchor. At a glance one sees
The subject's crowd of capabilities!

LXXIV.

Neptune and Amphitrité! Thetis, who
Is either Tethys or as good — both tag!
Triton can shove along a vessel too:
It 's Virgil! Then the winds that blow or lag, —
De Maille, Vendôme, Vermandois! Toulouse blew
Longest, we reckon: he must puff the flag
To fullest outflare; while our lacking nymph
Be Anne of Austria, Regent o'er the lymph!

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LXXV.

Promised, performed! Since *irritabilis gens*
Holds of the feverish impotence that strives
To stay an itch by prompt resource to pen's
Scratching itself on paper; placid lives,
Leisurely works mark the *divinior mens:*
Bees brood above the honey-in their hives;
Gnats are the busy bustlers. Splash and scrawl, —
Completed lay thy piece, swift penman Paul!

LXXVI.

To Paris with the product! This dispatched,
One had to wait the Forty's slow and sure
Verdict, as best one might. Our penman scratched
Away perforce the itch that knows no cure
But daily paper-friction: more than matched
His first feat by a second — tribute pure
And heartfelt to the Forty when their voice
Should peal with one accord "Be Paul our choice!

LXXVII.

Scratch, scratch went much laudation of that sane
And sound Tribunal, delegates august
Of Phœbus and the Muses' sacred train —
Whom every poetaster tries to thrust
From where, high-throned, they dominate the Seine:
Fruitless endeavor, — fail it shall and must!
Whereof in witness have not one and all
The Forty voices pealed "Our choice be Paul"?

LXXVIII.

Thus Paul discounted his applause. Alack
For human expectation! Scarcely ink
Was dry when, lo, the perfect piece came back
Rejected, shamed! Some other poet's clink
"Thetis and Tethys" had seduced the pack
Of pedants to declare perfection's pink
A singularly poor production. "Whew!
The Forty are stark fools, I always knew!"

LXXIX.

First fury over (for Paul's race — to wit,
Brain-vibrios — wriggle clear of protoplasm
Into minute life that 's one fury-fit),
"These fools shall find a bard's enthusiasm

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Comports with what should counterbalance it —
Some knowledge of the world! No doubt, orgasm
Effects the birth of verse which, born, demands
Prosaic ministration, swaddling-bands!

LXXX.

"Verse must be cared for at this early stage,
Handled, nay dandled even. I should play
Their game indeed if, till it grew of age,
I meekly let these dotards frown away
My bantling from the rightful heritage
Of smiles and kisses! Let the public say
If it be worthy praises or rebukes,
My poem, from these Forty old perukes!"

LXXXI.

So, by a friend, who boasts himself in grace
With no less than the Chevalier La Roque,—
Eminent in those days for pride of place,
Seeing he had it in his power to block
The way or smooth the road to all the race
Of literators trudging up to knock
At Fame's exalted temple-door — for why?
He edited the Paris "Mercury": —

LXXXII.

By this friend's help the Chevalier receives
Paul's poem, prefaced by the due appeal
To Cæsar from the Jews. As duly heaves
A sigh the Chevalier, about to deal
With case so customary — turns the leaves,
Finds nothing there to borrow, beg, or steal —
Then brightens up the critic's brow deep-lined.
"The thing may be so cleverly declined!"

LXXXIII.

Down to desk, out with paper, up with quill,
Dip and indite! "Sir, gratitude immense
For this true draught from the Pierian rill!
Our Academic clodpoles must be dense
Indeed to stand unirrigated still.
No less, we critics dare not give offence
To grandees like the Forty: while we mock,
We grin and bear. So, here 's your piece! La Roque."

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LXXXIV.

"There now!" cries Paul: "the fellow can't avoid
Confessing that my piece deserves the palm;
And yet he dares not grant me space enjoyed
By every scribbler he permits embalm
His crambo in the Journal's corner! Cloyed
With stuff like theirs, no wonder if a qualm
Be caused by verse like mine: though that 's no cause
For his defrauding me of just applause.

LXXXV.

"Aha, he fears the Forty, this poltroon?
First let him fear *me!* Change smooth speech to rough
I 'll speak my mind out, show the fellow soon
Who is the foe to dread: insist enough
On my own merits till, as clear as noon,
He sees I am no man to take rebuff
As patiently as scribblers may and must!
Quick to the onslaught, out sword, cut and thrust!"

LXXXVI.

And thereupon a fierce epistle flings
Its challenge in the critic's face. Alack!
Our bard mistakes his man! The gauntlet rings
On brazen visor proof against attack.
Prompt from his editorial throne up springs
The insulted magnate, and his mace falls, thwack,
On Paul's devoted brainpan, — quite away
From common courtesies of fencing-play!

LXXXVII.

"Sir, will you have the truth? This piece of yours
Is simply execrable past belief.
I shrank from saying so; but, since naught cures
Conceit but truth, truth 's at your service! Brief,
Just so long as 'The Mercury' endures,
So long are you excluded by its Chief
From corner, nay, from cranny! Play the cock
O' the roost, henceforth, at Croisic!" wrote La Roque.

LXXXVIII.

Paul yellowed, whitened, as his wrath from red
Waxed incandescent. Now, this man of rhyme
Was merely foolish, faulty in the head
Not heart of him: conceit 's a venial crime.

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"Oh by no means malicious!" cousins said:
Fussily feeble, — harmless all the time,
Piddling at so-called satire — well-advised,
He held in most awe whom he satirized.

LXXXIX.

Accordingly his kith and kin — removed
From emulation of the poet's gift
By power and will — these rather liked, nay, loved
The man who gave his family a lift
Out of the Croisic level; "disapproved
Satire so trenchant." Thus our poet sniffed
Home-incense, though too churlish to unlock
"The Mercury's" box of ointment was La Roque.

XC.

But when Paul's visage grew from red to white,
And from his lips a sort of mumbling fell
Of who was to be kicked, — "And serve him right!"
A soft voice interposed, "Did kicking well
Answer the purpose! Only — if I might
Suggest as much — a far more potent spell
Lies in another kind of treatment. Oh,
Women are ready at resource, you know!

XCI.

"Talent should minister to genius! good:
The proper and superior smile returns.
Hear me with patience! Have you understood
The only method whereby genius earns
Fit guerdon nowadays? In knightly mood
You entered lists with visor up; one learns
Too late that, had you mounted Roland's crest,
'Room!' they had roared — La Roque with all the rest!

XCII.

"Why did you first of all transmit your piece
To those same priggish Forty unprepared
Whether to rank you with the swans or geese
By friendly intervention? If they dared
Count you a cackler, — wonders never cease!
I think it still more wondrous that you bared
Your brow (my earlier image) as if praise
Were gained by simple fighting nowadays!

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XCIII.

"Your next step showed a touch of the true means
Whereby desert is crowned: not force but wile
Came to the rescue. 'Get behind the scenes!'
Your friend advised: he writes, sets forth your style
And title, to such purpose intervenes
That you get velvet-compliment three-pile;
And, though 'The Mercury' said 'nay,' nor stock
Nor stone did his refusal prove La Roque.

XCIV.

"Why must you needs revert to the high hand,
Imperative procedure — what you call
'Taking on merit your exclusive stand'?
Stand, with a vengeance! Soon you went to wall,
You and your merit! Only fools command
When folks are free to disobey them, Paul!
You 've learnt your lesson, found out what 's o'clock,
By this uncivil answer of La Roque.

XCV.

"Now let me counsel! Lay this piece on shelf
— Masterpiece though it be! From out your desk
Hand me some lighter sample, verse the elf
Cupid inspired you with, no god grotesque
Presiding o'er the Navy! I myself
Hand-write what 's legible yet picturesque;
I 'll copy fair and femininely frock
Your poem masculine that courts La Roque!

XCVI.

"Deïdamia he — Achilles thou!
Ha, ha, these ancient stories come so apt!
My sex, my youth, my rank I next avow
In a neat prayer for kind perusal. Sapped
I see the walls which stand so stoutly now!
I see the toils about the game entrapped
By honest cunning! Chains of lady's-smock,
Not thorn and thistle, tether fast La Roque!"

XCVII.

Now, who might be the speaker sweet and arch
That laughed above Paul's shoulder as it heaved
With the indignant heart? — bade steal a march
And not continue charging? Who conceived

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This plan which set our Paul, like pea you parch
On fire-shovel, skipping, of a load relieved,
From arm-chair moodiness to escritoire
Sacred to Phœbus and the tuneful choir?

XCVIII.

Who but Paul's sister! named of course like him
"Desforges"; but, mark you, in those days a queer
Custom obtained, — who knows whence grew the whim? —
That people could not read their title clear
To reverence till their own true names, made dim
By daily mouthing, pleased to disappear,
Replaced by brand-new bright ones: Arouet,
For instance, grew Voltaire; Desforges — Malcrais.

XCIX.

"Demoiselle Malcrais de la Vigne" — because
The family possessed at Brederac
A vineyard, — few grapes, many hips-and-haws, —
Still a nice Breton name. As breast and back
Of this vivacious beauty gleamed through gauze,
So did her sprightly nature nowise lack
Lustre when draped, the fashionable way,
In "Malcrais de la Vigne," — more short, "Malcrais."

C.

Out from Paul's escritoire behold escape
The hoarded treasure! verse falls thick and fast,
Sonnets and songs of every size and shape.
The lady ponders on her prize; at last
Selects one which — O angel and yet ape! —
Her malice thinks is probably surpassed
In badness by no fellow of the flock,
Copies it fair, and "Now for my La Roque!"

CI.

So, to him goes, with the neat manuscript,
The soft petitionary letter. "Grant
A fledgeling novice that with wing unclipt
She soar her little circuit, habitant
Of an old manor; buried in which crypt,
How can the youthful châtelaine but pant
For disemprisonment by one *ad hoc*
Appointed 'Mercury's' Editor, La Roque?"

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CII.

'T was an epistle that might move the Turk!
More certainly it moved our middle-aged
Pen-driver drudging at his weary work,
Raked the old ashes up and disengaged
The sparks of gallantry which always lurk
Somehow in literary breasts, assuaged
In no degree by compliments on style;
Are Forty wagging beards worth one girl's smile?

CIII.

In trips the lady's poem, takes its place
Of honor in the gratified Gazette,
With due acknowledgment of power and grace;
Prognostication, too, that higher yet
The Breton Muse will soar: fresh youth, high race,
Beauty and wealth have amicably met
That Demoiselle Malcrais may fill the chair
Left vacant by the loss of Deshoulières.

CIV.

"There!" cried the lively lady. "Who was right —
You in the dumps, or I the merry maid
Who know a trick or two can baffle spite
Tenfold the force of this old fool's? Afraid
Of Editor La Roque? But come! next flight
Shall outsoar — Deshoulières alone? My blade,
Sappho herself shall you confess outstript!
Quick, Paul, another dose of manuscript!"

CV.

And so, once well a-foot, advanced the game:
More and more verses, corresponding gush
On gush of praise, till everywhere acclaim
Rose to the pitch of uproar. "Sappho? Tush!
Sure 'Malcrais on her Parrot' puts to shame
Deshoulières' pastorals, clay not worth a rush
Beside this find of treasure, gold in crock,
Unearthed in Brittany, — nay, ask La Roque!"

CVI.

Such was the Paris tribute. "Yes," you sneer,
"Ninnies stock Noodledom, but folk more sage
Resist contagious folly, never fear!"
Do they? Permit me to detach one page

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From the huge Album which from far and near
Poetic praises blackened in a rage
Of rapture! and that page shall be — who stares
Confounded now, I ask you? — just Voltaire's!

CVII.

Ay, sharpest shrewdest steel that ever stabbed
To death Imposture through the armor-joints!
How did it happen that gross Humbug grabbed
Thy weapons, gouged thine eyes out? Fate appoints
That pride shall have a fall, or I had blabbed
Hardly that Humbug, whom thy soul aroints,
Could thus cross-buttock thee caught unawares,
And dismalest of tumbles proved — Voltaire's!

CVIII.

See his epistle extant yet, wherewith
"Henri" in verse and "Charles" in prose he sent
To do her suit and service! Here 's the pith
Of half a dozen stanzas — stones which went
To build that simulated monolith —
Sham love in due degree with homage blent
As sham — which in the vast of volumes scares
The traveller still: "That stucco-heap — Voltaire's?"

CIX.

"Oh thou, whose clarion-voice has overflown
The wilds to startle Paris that 's one ear!
Thou who such strange capacity hast shown
For joining all that 's grand with all that 's dear,
Knowledge with power to please — Deshoulières grown
Learned as Dacier in thy person! mere
Weak fruit of idle hours, these crabs of mine
I dare lay at thy feet, O Muse divine!

CX.

"Charles was my task-work only; Henri trod
My hero erst, and now, my heroine — she
Shall be thyself! True — is it true, great God!
Certainly love henceforward must not be!
Yet all the crowd of Fine Arts fail — how odd! —
Tried turn by turn, to fill a void in me!
There 's no replacing love with these, alas!
Yet all I can I do to prove no ass.

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CXI.

"I labor to amuse my freedom; but
Should any sweet young creature slavery preach,
And — borrowing thy vivacious charm, the slut! —
Make me, in thy engaging words, a speech,
Soon should I see myself in prison shut
With all imaginable pleasure." Reach
The washhand-basin for admirers! There 's
A stomach-moving tribute — and Voltaire's!

CXII.

Suppose it a fantastic billet-doux,
Adulatory flourish, not worth frown!
What say you to the Fathers of Trévoux?
These in their Dictionary have her down
Under the heading "Author": "Malcrais, too,
Is 'Author' of much verse that claims renown."
While Jean-Baptiste Rousseau . . . but why proceed?
Enough of this — something too much, indeed!

CXIII.

At last La Roque, unwilling to be left
Behindhand in the rivalry, broke bounds
Of figurative passion; hilt and heft,
Plunged his huge downright love through what surrounds
The literary female bosom; reft
Away its veil of coy reserve with "Zounds!
I love thee, Breton Beauty! All 's no use!
Body and soul I love, — the big word 's loose!"

CXIV.

He 's greatest now and to de-struc-ti-on
Nearest. Attend the solemn word I quote,
Oh Paul! *There 's no pause at per-fec-ti-on.*
Thus knolls thy knell the Doctor's bronzed throat!
Greatness a period hath, no sta-ti-on!
Better and truer verse none ever wrote
(Despite the antique outstretched *a-i-on*)
Than thou, revered and magisterial Donne!

CXV.

Flat on his face, La Roque, and — pressed to heart
His dexter hand — Voltaire with bended knee!
Paul sat and sucked-in triumph; just apart
Leaned over him his sister. "Well?" smirks he,

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And "Well?" she answers, smiling — woman's art
To let a man's own mouth, not hers, decree
What shall be next move which decides the game:
Success? She said so. Failure? His the blame.

CXVI.

"Well!" this time forth affirmatively comes
With smack of lip, and long-drawn sigh through teeth
Close clenched o'er satisfaction, as the gums
Were tickled by a sweetmeat teased beneath
Palate by lubricating tongue: "Well! crumbs
Of comfort these, undoubtedly! no death
Likely from famine at Fame's feast! 't is clear
I may put claim in for my pittance, Dear!

CXVII.

"La Roque, Voltaire, my lovers? Then disguise
Has served its turn, grows idle; let it drop!
I shall to Paris, flaunt there in men's eyes
My proper manly garb and mount a-top
The pedestal that waits me, take the prize
Awarded Hercules. He threw a sop
To Cerberus who let him pass, you know,
Then, following, licked his heels: exactly so!

CXVIII.

"I like the prospect — their astonishment,
Confusion: wounded vanity, no doubt,
Mixed motives; how I see the brows quick bent!
'What, sir, yourself, none other, brought about
This change of estimation? Phœbus sent
His shafts as from Diana?' Critic pout
Turns courtier smile: 'Lo, him we took for her!
Pleasant mistake! You bear no malice, sir?'

CXIX.

"Eh, my Diana?" But Diana kept
Smilingly silent with fixed needle-sharp
Much-meaning eyes that seemed to intercept
Paul's very thoughts ere they had time to warp
From earnest into sport the words they leapt
To life with — changed as when maltreated harp
Renders in tinkle what some player-prig
Means for a grave tune though it proves a jig.

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CXX.

"What, Paul, and are my pains thus thrown away,
My lessons end in loss?" at length fall slow
The pitying syllables, her lips allay
The satire of by keeping in full flow,
Above their coral reef, bright smiles at play:
"Can it be, Paul thus fails to rightly know
And altogether estimate applause
As just so many asinine hee-haws?

CXXI.

"I thought to show you" . . . "Show me," Paul inbroke,
"My poetry is rubbish, and the world
That rings with my renown a sorry joke!
What fairer test of worth than that, form furled,
I entered the arena? Yet you croak
Just as if Phœbé and not Phœbus hurled
The dart and struck the Python! What, he crawls
Humbly in dust before your feet, not Paul's?

CXXII.

"Nay, 't is no laughing matter though absurd
If there 's an end of honesty on earth!
La Roque sends letters, lying every word!
Voltaire makes verse, and of himself makes mirth
To the remotest age! Rousseau 's the third
Who, driven to despair amid such dearth
Of people that want praising, finds no one
More fit to praise than Paul the simpleton!

CXXIII.

"Somebody says — if a man writes at all
It is to show the writer's kith and kin
He was unjustly thought a natural;
And truly, sister, I have yet to win
Your favorable word, it seems, for Paul
Whose poetry you count not worth a pin
Though well enough esteemed by these Voltaires,
Rousseaus and such-like: let them quack, who cares?"

CXXIV.

"— To Paris with you, Paul! Not one word's waste
Further: my scrupulosity was vain!
Go triumph! Be my foolish fears effaced
From memory's record! Go, to come again

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With glory crowned, — by sister re-embraced,
Cured of that strange delusion of her brain
Which led her to suspect that Paris gloats
On male limbs mostly when in petticoats!" ·

CXXV.

So laughed her last word, with the little touch
Of malice proper to the outraged pride
Of any artist in a work too much
Shorn of its merits. "By all means, be tried
The opposite procedure! Cast your crutch
Away, no longer crippled, nor divide
The credit of your march to the World's Fair
With sister Cherry-cheeks who helped you there!"

CXXVI.

Crippled, forsooth! What courser sprightlier pranced
Paris-ward than did Paul? Nay, dreams lent wings:
He flew, or seemed to fly, by dreams entranced.
Dreams? wide-awake realities: no things
Dreamed merely were the missives that advanced
The claim of Malcrais to consort with kings
Crowned by Apollo — not to say with queens
Cinctured by Venus for Idalian scenes.

CXXVII.

Soon he arrives, forthwith is found before
The outer gate of glory. Bold tic-toc
Announces there 's a giant at the door.
"Ay, sir, here dwells the Chevalier La Roque."
"Lackey! Malcrais — mind, no word less nor more! —
Desires his presence. I 've unearthed the brock:
Now, to transfix him!" There stands Paul erect,
Inched out his uttermost, for more effect.

CXXVIII.

A bustling entrance: "Idol of my flame!
Can it be that my heart attains at last
Its longing? that you stand, the very same
As in my visions? . . . Ha! hey, how?" aghast
Stops short the rapture. "Oh, my boy 's to blame!
You merely are the messenger! Too fast
My fancy rushed to a conclusion. Pooh!
Well, sir, the lady's substitute is — who?"

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CXXIX.

Then Paul's smirk grows inordinate. "Shake hands!
Friendship not love awaits you, master mine,
Though nor Malcrais nor any mistress stands
To meet your ardor! So, you don't divine
Who wrote the verses wherewith ring the land's
Whole length and breadth? Just he whereof no line
Had ever leave to blot your Journal — eh?
Paul Desforges Maillard — otherwise Malcrais!"

CXXX.

And there the two stood, stare confronting smirk,
Awhile uncertain which should yield the *pas*.
In vain the Chevalier beat brain for quirk
To help in this conjuncture; at length, "Bah!
Boh! Since I 've made myself a fool, why shirk
The punishment of folly? Ha, ha, ha,
Let me return your handshake!" Comic sock
For tragic buskin prompt thus changed La Roque.

CXXXI.

'I 'm nobody — a wren-like journalist;
You 've flown at higher game and winged your bird,
The golden eagle! That 's the grand acquist!
Voltaire's sly Muse, the tiger-cat, has purred
Prettily round your feet; but if she missed
Priority of stroking, soon were stirred
The dormant spitfire. To Voltaire! away,
Paul Desforges Maillard, otherwise Malcrais!"

CXXXII.

Whereupon, arm in arm, and head in air,
The two begin their journey. Need I say,
La Roque had felt the talon of Voltaire,
Had a long-standing little debt to pay,
And pounced, you may depend, on such a rare
Occasion for its due discharge? So, gay
And grenadier-like, marching to assault,
They reach the enemy's abode, there halt.

CXXXIII.

"I 'll be announcer!" quoth La Roque: "I know,
Better than you, perhaps, my Breton bard,
How to procure an audience! He 's not slow
To smell a rat, this scamp Voltaire! Discard

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The petticoats too soon, — you 'll never show
Your *haut-de-chausses* and all they 've made or marred
In your true person. Here 's his servant. Pray,
Will the great man see Demoiselle Malcrais ? "

CXXXIV.

Now, the great man was also, no whit less,
The man of self-respect, — more great man he!
And bowed to social usage, dressed the dress,
And decorated to the fit degree
His person ; 't was enough to bear the stress
Of battle in the field, without, when free
From outside foes, inviting friends' attack
By — sword in hand ? No, —ill-made coat on back.

CXXXV.

And, since the announcement of his visitor
Surprised him at his toilet, — never glass
Had such solicitation ! " Black, now — or
Brown be the killing wig to wear ? Alas,
Where 's the rouge gone, this cheek were better for
A tender touch of ? Melted to a mass,
All my pomatum ! There 's at all events
A devil — for he 's got among my scents ! "

CXXXVI.

So, " barbered ten times o'er," as Antony
Paced to his Cleopatra, did at last
Voltaire proceed to the fair presence : high
In color, proud in port, as if a blast
Of trumpet bade the world " Take note ! draws nigh
To Beauty, Power ! Behold the Iconoclast,
The Poet, the Philosopher, the Rod
Of iron for imposture ! Ah my God ! "

CXXXVII.

For there stands smirking Paul, and — what lights fierce
The situation as with sulphur flash —
There grinning stands La Roque ! No carte-and-tierce
Observes the grinning fencer, but, full dash
From breast to shoulderblade, the thrusts transpierce
That armor against which so idly clash
The swords of priests and pedants ! Victors there,
Two smirk and grin who have befooled — Voltaire !

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CXXXVIII.

A moment's horror; then quick turn-about
On high-heeled shoe, — flurry of ruffles, flounce
Of wig-ties and of coat-tails, — and so out
Of door banged wrathfully behind, goes — bounce —
Voltaire in tragic exit! vows, no doubt,
Vengeance upon the couple. Did he trounce
Either, in point of fact? His anger's flash
Subsided if a culprit craved his cash.

CXXXIX.

As for La Roque, he having laughed his laugh
To heart's content, — the joke defunct at once,
Dead in the birth, you see, — its epitaph
Was sober earnest. "Well, sir, for the nonce,
You 've gained the laurel; never hope to graff
A second sprig of triumph there! Ensconce
Yourself again at Croisic: let it be
Enough you mastered both Voltaire and — me!

CXL.

"Don't linger here in Paris to parade
Your victory, and have the very boys
Point at you! 'There 's the little mouse which made
Believe those two big lions that its noise,
Nibbling away behind the hedge, conveyed
Intelligence that — portent which destroys
All courage in the lion's heart, with horn
That 's fable — there lay couched the unicorn!'

CXLI.

"Beware us, now we 've found who fooled us! Quick
To cover! 'In proportion to men's fright,
Expect their fright's revenge!' quoth politic
Old Macchiavelli. As for me, — all 's right:
I 'm but a journalist. But no pin's prick
The tooth leaves when Voltaire is roused to bite!
So, keep your counsel, I advise! Adieu!
Good journey! Ha, ha, ha, Malcrais was — you!"

CXLII.

"— Yes, I 'm Malcrais, and somebody beside,
You snickering monkey!" thus winds up the tale
Our hero, safe at home, to that black-eyed
Cherry-cheeked sister, as she soothes the pale

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Mortified poet. "Let their worst be tried,
I 'm their match henceforth — very man and male!
Don't talk to me of knocking-under! man
And male must end what petticoats began!

CXLIII.

"How woman-like it is to apprehend
The world will eat its words! why, words transfixed
To stone, they stare at you in print, — at end,
Each writer's style and title! Choose betwixt
Fool and knave for his name, who should intend
To perpetrate a baseness so unmixed
With prospect of advantage! What is writ
Is writ: they 've praised me, there 's an end of it!

CXLIV.

"No, Dear, allow me! I shall print these same
Pieces, with no omitted line, as Paul's.
Malcrais no longer, let me see folk blame
What they — praised simply? — placed on pedestals,
Each piece a statue in the House of Fame!
Fast will they stand there, though their presence galls
The envious crew: such show their teeth, perhaps,
And snarl, but never bite! I know the chaps!"

CXLV.

Oh Paul, oh piteously deluded! Pace
Thy sad sterility of Croisic flats,
Watch, from their southern edge, the foamy race
Of high-tide as it heaves the drowning mats
Of yellow-berried web-growth from their place,
The rock-ridge, when, rolling as far as Batz,
One broadside crashes on it, and the crags,
That needle under, stream with weedy rags!

CXLVI.

Or, if thou wilt, at inland Bergerac,
Rude heritage but recognized domain,
Do as two here are doing: make hearth crack
With logs until thy chimney roar again
Jolly with fire-glow! Let its angle lack
No grace of Cherry-cheeks thy sister, fain
To do a sister's office and laugh smooth
Thy corrugated brow — that scowls forsooth!

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CXLVII.

Wherefore? Who does not know how these La Roques,
Voltaires, can say and unsay, praise and blame,
Prove black white, white black, play at paradox
And, when they seem to lose it, win the game?
Care not thou what this badger, and that fox,
His fellow in rascality, call "fame!"
Fiddlepin's end! Thou hadst it, — quack, quack, quack!
Have quietude from geese at Bergerac!

CXLVIII.

Quietude! For, be very sure of this!
A twelvemonth hence, and men shall know or care
As much for what to-day they clap or hiss
As for the fashion of the wigs they wear,
Then wonder at. There 's fame which, bale or bliss, —
Got by no gracious word of great Voltaire
Or not-so-great La Roque, — is taken back
By neither, any more than Bergerac!

CXLIX.

Too true! or rather, true as ought to be!
No more of Paul the man, Malcrais the maid,
Thenceforth forever! One or two, I see,
Stuck by their poet: who the longest stayed
Was Jean-Baptiste Rousseau, and even he
Seemingly saddened as perforce he paid
A rhyming tribute: "After death, survive —
He hoped he should: and died while yet alive!"

CL.

No, he hoped nothing of the kind, or held
His peace and died in silent good old age.
Him it was, curiosity impelled
To seek if there were extant still some page
Of his great predecessor, rat who belled
The cat once, and would never deign engage
In after-combat with mere mice, — saved from
More sonneteering, — René Gentilhomme.

CLI.

Paul's story furnished forth that famous play
Of Piron's "Métromanie": there you 'll find
He 's Francaleu, while Demoiselle Malcrais
Is Demoiselle No-end-of-names-behind!

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As for Voltaire, he 's Damis. Good and gay
The plot and dialogue, and all 's designed
To spite Voltaire: at "Something" such the laugh
Of simply "Nothing!" (see his epitaph.)

CLII.

But truth, truth, that 's the gold! and all the good
I find in fancy is, it serves to set
Gold's inmost glint free, gold which comes up rude
And rayless from the mine. All fume and fret
Of artistry beyond this point pursued
Brings out another sort of burnish: yet
Always the ingot has its very own
Value, a sparkle struck from truth alone.

CLIII.

Now, take this sparkle and the other spirt
Of fitful flame, — twin births of our gray brand
That 's sinking fast to ashes! I assert,
As sparkles want but fuel to expand
Into a conflagration no mere squirt
Will quench too quickly, so might Croisic strand,
Had Fortune pleased posterity to chowse.
Boast of her brace of beacons luminous.

CLIV.

Did earlier Agamemnons lack their bard?
But later bards lacked Agamemnon too!
How often frustrate they of fame's award
Just because Fortune, as she listed, blew
Some slight bark's sails to bellying, mauled and marred
And forced to put about the First-rate! True,
Such tacks but for a time: still — small-craft ride
At anchor, rot while Beddoes breasts the tide!

CLV.

Dear, shall I tell you? There 's a simple test
Would serve, when people take on them to weigh
The worth of poets. "Who was better, best,
This, that, the other bard?" (bards none gainsay
As good, observe! no matter for the rest.)
"What quality preponderating may
Turn the scale as it trembles?" End the strife
By asking "Which one led a happy life?"

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CLVI.

If one did, over his antagonist
That yelled or shrieked or sobbed or wept or wailed
Or simply had the dumps, — dispute who list, —
I count him victor. Where his fellow failed,
Mastered by his own means of might, — acquist
Of necessary sorrows, — he prevailed,
A strong since joyful man who stood distinct
Above slave-sorrows to his chariot linked.

CLVII.

Was not his lot to feel more? What meant "feel"
Unless to suffer! Not, to see more? Sight —
What helped it but to watch the drunken reel
Of vice and folly round him, left and right,
One dance of rogues and idiots! Not, to deal
More with things lovely? What provoked the spite
Of filth incarnate, like the poet's need
Of other nutriment than strife and greed!

CLVIII.

Who knows most, doubts most; entertaining hope,
Means recognizing fear; the keener sense
Of all comprised within our actual scope
Recoils from aught beyond earth's dim and dense.
Who, grown familiar with the sky, will grope
Henceforward among groundlings? That's offence
Just as indubitably: stars abound
O'erhead, but then — what flowers make glad the ground!

CLIX.

So, force is sorrow, and each sorrow, force:
What then? since Swiftness gives the charioteer
The palm, his hope be in the vivid horse
Whose neck God clothed with thunder, not the steer
Sluggish and safe! Yoke Hatred, Crime, Remorse,
Despair: but ever 'mid the whirling fear,
Let, through the tumult, break the poet's face
Radiant, assured his wild slaves win the race!

CLX.

Therefore I say . . . no, shall not say, but think,
And save my breath for better purpose. White
From gray our log has burned to: just one blink
That quivers, loth to leave it, as a sprite

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The outworn body. Ere your eyelids' wink
Punish who sealed so deep into the night
Your mouth up, for two poets dead so long, —
Here pleads a live pretender: right your wrong!

I.

WHAT a pretty tale you told me
Once upon a time
— Said you found it somewhere (scold me!)
Was it prose or was it rhyme,
Greek or Latin? Greek, you said,
While your shoulder propped my head.

II.

Anyhow there 's no forgetting
This much if no more,
That a poet (pray, no petting!)
Yes, a bard, sir, famed of yore,
Went where suchlike used to go,
Singing for a prize, you know.

III.

Well, he had to sing, nor merely
Sing but play the lyre;
Playing was important clearly
Quite as singing: I desire,
Sir, you keep the fact in mind
For a purpose that 's behind.

IV.

There stood he, while deep attention
Held the judges round,
— Judges able, I should mention,
To detect the slightest sound
Sung or played amiss: such ears
Had old judges, it appears!

V.

None the less he sang out boldly,
Played in time and tune,
Till the judges, weighing coldly
Each note's worth, seemed, late or soon,
Sure to smile "In vain one tries
Picking faults out: take the prize!"

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VI.

When, a mischief! Were they seven
Strings the lyre possessed?
Oh, and afterwards eleven,
Thank you! Well, sir, — who had guessed
Such ill luck in store? — it happed
One of those same seven strings snapped.

VII.

All was lost, then! No! a cricket
(What "cicada"? Pooh!)
— Some mad thing that left its thicket
For mere love of music — flew
With its little heart on fire,
Lighted on the crippled lyre.

VIII.

So that when (Ah joy!) our singer
For his truant string
Feels with disconcerted finger,
What does cricket else but fling
Fiery heart forth, sound the note
Wanted by the throbbing throat?

IX.

Ay and, ever to the ending,
Cricket chirps at need,
Executes the hand's intending,
Promptly, perfectly, — indeed
Saves the singer from defeat
With her chirrup low and sweet.

X.

Till, at ending, all the judges
Cry with one assent
"Take the prize — a prize who grudges
Such a voice and instrument?
Why, we took your lyre for harp,
So it shrilled us forth F sharp!"

XI.

Did the conqueror spurn the creature,
Once its service done?
That 's no such uncommon feature
In the case when Music's son

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Finds his Lotte's power too spent
For aiding soul-development.

XII.

No! This other, on returning
Homeward, prize in hand,
Satisfied his bosom's yearning:
(Sir, I hope you understand!)
— Said "Some record there must be
Of this cricket's help to me!"

XIII.

So, he made himself a statue:
Marble stood, life-size;
On the lyre, he pointed at you,
Perched his partner in the prize;
Never more apart you found
Her, he throned, from him, she crowned.

XIV.

That 's the tale: its application?
Somebody I know
Hopes one day for reputation
Through his poetry that 's — Oh,
All so learned and so wise
And deserving of a prize!

XV.

If he gains one, will some ticket,
When his statue 's built,
Tell the gazer "'T was a cricket
Helped my crippled lyre, whose lilt
Sweet and low, when strength usurped
Softness' place i' the scale, she chirped?

XVI.

"For as victory was nighest,
While I sang and played, —
With my lyre at lowest, highest,
Right alike, — one string that made
'Love' sound soft was snapt in twain,
Never to be heard again, —

XVII.

"Had not a kind cricket fluttered,
Perched upon the place

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Vacant left, and duly uttered
'Love, Love, Love,' whene'er the bass
Asked the treble to atone
For its somewhat sombre drone."

XVIII.

But you don't know music! Wherefore
Keep on casting pearls
To a — poet? All I care for
Is — to tell him that a girl's
"Love" comes aptly in when gruff
Grows his singing. (There, enough!)

JANUARY 15, 1878.

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DRAMATIC IDYLS

FIRST SERIES

[1879]

MARTIN RELPH.

My grandfather says he remembers he saw, when a youngster long ago,
On a bright May day, a strange old man, with a beard as white as snow,
Stand on the hill outside our town like a monument of woe,
And, striking his bare bald head the while, sob out the reason — so!

If I last as long as Methuselah I shall never forgive myself:
But — God forgive me, that I pray, unhappy Martin Relph,
As coward, coward I call him — him, yes, him! Away from me!
Get you behind the man I am now, you man that I used to be!

What can have sewed my mouth up, set me a-stare, all eyes, no tongue?
People have urged, "You visit a scare too hard on a lad so young!
You were taken aback, poor boy," they urge, "no time to regain your wits:
Besides it had maybe cost you life." Ay, there is the cap which fits!

So, cap me, the coward, — thus! No fear! A cuff on the brow does good:
The feel of it hinders a worm inside which bores at the brain for food.
See now, there certainly seems excuse: for a moment, I trust, dear friends,
The fault was but folly, no fault of mine, or if mine, I have made amends!

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For, every day that is first of May, on the hill-top, here stand I,
Martin Relph, and I strike my brow, and publish the reason why,
When there gathers a crowd to mock the fool. No fool, friends, since the bite
Of a worm inside is worse to bear: pray God I have balked him quite!

I 'll tell you. Certainly much excuse! It came of the way they cooped
Us peasantry up in a ring just here, close huddling because tight-hooped
By the red-coats round us villagers all: they meant we should see the sight
And take the example, — see, not speak, for speech was the Captain's right.

"You clowns on the slope, beware!" cried he: "This woman about to die
Gives by her fate fair warning to such acquaintance as play the spy.
Henceforth who meddle with matters of state above them perhaps will learn
That peasants should stick to their plough-tail, leave to the King the King's concern.

"Here 's a quarrel that sets the land on fire, between King George and his foes:
What call has a man of your kind — much less, a woman — to interpose?
Yet you needs must be meddling, folk like you, not foes — so much the worse!
The many and loyal should keep themselves unmixed with the few perverse.

"Is the counsel hard to follow? I gave it you plainly a month ago,
And where was the good? The rebels have learned just all that they need to know.
Not a month since in we quietly marched: a week, and they had the news,
From a list complete of our rank and file to a note of our caps and shoes.

"All about all we did and all we were doing and like to do!
Only, I catch a letter by luck, and capture who wrote it, too.

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Some of you men look black enough, but the milk-white face demure
Betokens the finger foul with ink: 'tis a woman who writes, be sure!

"Is it 'Dearie, how much I miss your mouth!' — good natural stuff, she pens?
Some sprinkle of that, for a blind, of course: with talk about cocks and hens,
How 'robin has built on the apple-tree, and our creeper which came to grief
Through the frost, we feared, is twining afresh round casement in famous leaf.'

"But all for a blind! She soon glides frank into 'Horrid the place is grown
With Officers here and Privates there, no nook we may call our own:
And Farmer Giles has a tribe to house, and lodging will be to seek
For the second Company sure to come ('t is whispered) on Monday week.'

"And so to the end of the chapter! There! The murder, you see, was out:
Easy to guess how the change of mind in the rebels was brought about!
Safe in the trap would they now lie snug, had treachery made no sign:
But treachery meets a just reward, no matter if fools malign!

"That traitors had played us false, was proved — sent news which fell so pat:
And the murder was out — this letter of love, the sender of this sent that!
'T is an ugly job, though, all the same — a hateful, to have to deal
With a case of the kind, when a woman 's in fault: we soldiers need nerves of steel!

"So, I gave her a chance, dispatched post-haste a message to Vincent Parkes
Whom she wrote to; easy to find he was, since one of the King's own clerks,

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Ay, kept by the King's own gold in the town close by where the rebels camp:
A sort of a lawyer, just the man to betray our sort — the scamp!

"'If her writing is simple and honest and only the lover-like stuff it looks,
And if you yourself are a loyalist, nor down in the rebels' books,
Come quick,' said I, 'and in person prove you are each of you clear of crime,
Or martial law must take its course: this day next week 's the time!'

"Next week is now: does he come? Not he! Clean gone, our clerk, in a trice!
He has left his sweetheart here in the lurch: no need of a warning twice!
His own neck free, but his partner's fast in the noose still, here she stands
To pay for her fault. 'T is an ugly job: but soldiers obey commands.

"And hearken wherefore I make a speech! Should any acquaintance share
The folly that led to the fault that is now to be punished, let fools beware!
Look black, if you please, but keep hands white: and, above all else, keep wives —
Or sweethearts or what they may be — from ink! Not a word now, on your lives!"

Black? but the Pit's own pitch was white to the Captain's face — the brute
With the bloated cheeks and the bulgy nose and the blood-shot eyes to suit!
He was muddled with wine, they say: more like, he was out of his wits with fear;
He had but a handful of men, that 's true, — a riot might cost him dear.

And all that time stood Rosamund Page, with pinioned arms and face
Bandaged about, on the turf marked out for the party's firing-place.

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I hope she was wholly with God: I hope 't was His angel stretched a hand
To steady her so, like the shape of stone you see in our church-aisle stand.

I hope there was no vain fancy pierced the bandage to vex her eyes,
No face within which she missed without, no questions and no replies —
"Why did you leave me to die?" — "Because" . . . Oh, fiends, too soon you grin
At merely a moment of hell, like that — such heaven as hell ended in!

Let mine end too! He gave the word, up went the guns in a line.
Those heaped on the hill were blind as dumb, — for, of all eyes, only mine
Looked over the heads of the foremost rank. Some fell on their knees in prayer,
Some sank to the earth, but all shut eyes, with a sole exception there.

That was myself, who had stolen up last, had sidled behind the group:
I am highest of all on the hill-top, there stand fixed while the others stoop!
From head to foot in a serpent's twine am I tightened: *I* touch ground?
No more than a gibbet's rigid corpse which the fetters rust around!

Can I speak, can I breathe, can I burst — aught else but see, see, only see?
And see I do — for there comes in sight — a man, it sure must be! —
Who staggeringly, stumblingly rises, falls, rises, at random flings his weight
On and on, anyhow onward — a man that 's mad he arrives too late!

Else why does he wave a something white high-flourished above his head?
Why does not he call, cry, — curse the fool! — why throw up his arms instead?

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O take this fist in your own face, fool! Why does not yourself shout "Stay!
Here 's a man comes rushing, might and main, with something he 's mad to say"?

And a minute, only a moment, to have hell-fire boil up in your brain,
And ere you can judge things right, choose heaven, — time 's over, repentance vain!
They level: a volley, a smoke and the clearing of smoke: I see no more
Of the man smoke hid, nor his frantic arms, nor the something white he bore.

But stretched on the field, some half-mile off, is an object. Surely dumb,
Deaf, blind were we struck, that nobody heard, not one of us saw him come!
Has he fainted through fright? One may well believe! What is it he holds so fast?
Turn him over, examine the face! Heyday! What, Vincent Parkes at last?

Dead! dead as she, by the selfsame shot: one bullet has ended both,
Her in the body and him in the soul. They laugh at our plighted troth.
"Till death us do part?" Till death us do join past parting — that sounds like
Betrothal indeed! O Vincent Parkes, what need has my fist to strike?

I helped you: thus were you dead and wed: one bound, and your soul reached hers!
There is clenched in your hand the thing, signed, sealed, the paper which plain avers
She is innocent, innocent, plain as print, with the King's Arms broad engraved:
No one can hear, but if anyone high on the hill can see, she 's saved!

And torn his garb and bloody his lips with heart-break — plain it grew
How the week's delay had been brought about: each guess at the end proved true.
It was hard to get at the folk in power: such waste of time! and then

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Such pleading and praying, with, all the while, his lamb in the lions' den!

And at length when he wrung their pardon out, no end to the stupid forms —
The license and leave: I make no doubt — what wonder if passion warms
The pulse in a man if you play with his heart? — he was something hasty in speech;
Anyhow, none would quicken the work: he had to beseech, beseech!

And the thing once signed, sealed, safe in his grasp, — what followed but fresh delays?
For the floods were out, he was forced to take such a round-about of ways!
And 't was "Halt there!" at every turn of the road, since he had to cross the thick
Of the red-coats: what did they care for him and his "Quick, for God's sake, quick!"

Horse? but he had one: had it how long? till the first knave smirked "You brag
Yourself a friend of the King's? then lend to a King's friend here your nag!"
Money to buy another? Why, piece by piece they plundered him still,
With their "Wait you must, — no help: if aught can help you, a guinea will!"

And a borough there was — I forget the name — whose Mayor must have the bench
Of Justices ranged to clear a doubt: for "Vincent," thinks he, sounds French!
It well may have driven him daft, God knows! all man can certainly know
Is — rushing and falling and rising, at last he arrived in a horror — so!

When a word, cry, gasp, would have rescued both! Ay, bite me! The worm begins
At his work once more. Had cowardice proved — that only — my sin of sins!
Friends, look you here! Suppose . . . suppose . . . But mad I am, needs must be!
Judas the Damned would never have dared such a sin as I dream! For, see!

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Suppose I had sneakingly loved her myself, my wretched self,
and dreamed
In the heart of me "She were better dead than happy and
his!" — while gleamed
A light from hell as I spied the pair in a perfectest embrace,
He the savior and she the saved, — bliss born of the very
murder-place!

No! Say I was scared, friends! Call me fool and coward,
but nothing worse!
Jeer at the fool and gibe at the coward! 'T was ever the
coward's curse
That fear breeds fancies in such: such take their shadow for
substance still,
— A fiend at their back. I liked poor Parkes, — loved Vincent,
if you will!

And her — why, I said "Good morrow" to her, "Good even,"
and nothing more:
The neighborly way! She was just to me as fifty had been
before.
So, coward it is and coward shall be! There 's a friend, now!
Thanks! A drink
Of water I wanted: and now I can walk, get home by myself,
I think.

PHEIDIPPIDES.

Χαίρετε, νικῶμεν.

First I salute this soil of the blessed, river and rock!
Gods of my birthplace, demons and heroes, honor to all!
Then I name thee, claim thee for our patron, co-equal in praise
— Ay, with Zeus the Defender, with Her of the ægis and spear!
Also, ye of the bow and the buskin, praised be your peer,
Now, henceforth and forever, — O latest to whom I upraise
Hand and heart and voice! For Athens, leave pasture and
flock!
Present to help, potent to save, Pan — patron I call!

Archons of Athens, topped by the tettix, see, I return!
See, 't is myself here standing alive, no spectre that speaks!
Crowned with the myrtle, did you command me, Athens and
you,

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"Run, Pheidippides, run and race, reach Sparta for aid!
Persia has come, we are here, where is She?" Your command
I obeyed,
Ran and raced: like stubble, some field which a fire runs
through,
Was the space between city and city: two days, two nights did
I burn
Over the hills, under the dales, down pits and up peaks.

Into their midst I broke: breath served but for "Persia has
come!
Persia bids Athens proffer slaves'-tribute, water and earth;
Razed to the ground is Eretria — but Athens, shall Athens sink,
Drop into dust and die — the flower of Hellas utterly die,
Die, with the wide world spitting at Sparta, the stupid, the
stander-by?
Answer me quick, what help, what hand do you stretch o'er
destruction's brink?
How, — when? No care for my limbs! — there 's lightning in
all and some —
Fresh and fit your message to bear, once lips give it birth!"

O my Athens — Sparta love thee? Did Sparta respond?
Every face of her leered in a furrow of envy, mistrust,
Malice, — each eye of her gave me its glitter of gratified hate!
Gravely they turned to take counsel, to cast for excuses. I
stood
Quivering, — the limbs of me fretting as fire frets, an inch from
dry wood:
"Persia has come, Athens asks aid, and still they debate?
Thunder, thou Zeus! Athene, are Spartans a quarry beyond
Swing of thy spear? Phoibos and Artemis, clang them 'Ye
must'!"

No bolt launched from Olumpos! Lo, their answer at last!
"Has Persia come, — does Athens ask aid, — may Sparta be-
friend?
Nowise precipitate judgment — too weighty the issue at stake!
Count we no time lost time which lags through respect to the
gods!
Ponder that precept of old, 'No warfare, whatever the odds
In your favor, so long as the moon, half-orbed, is unable to
take
Full-circle her state in the sky!' Already she rounds to it
fast:
Athens must wait, patient as we — who judgment suspend."

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Athens, — except for that sparkle, — thy name, I had mouldered to ash!
That sent a blaze through my blood; off, off and away was I back,
— Not one word to waste, one look to lose on the false and the vile!
Yet "O gods of my land!" I cried, as each hillock and plain,
Wood and stream, I knew, I named, rushing past them again,
"Have ye kept faith, proved mindful of honors we paid you erewhile?
Vain was the filleted victim, the fulsome libation! Too rash
Love in its choice, paid you so largely service so slack!

"Oak and olive and bay, — I bid you cease to enwreathe
Brows made bold by your leaf! Fade at the Persian's foot,
You that, our patrons were pledged, should never adorn a slave!
Rather I hail thee, Parnes, — trust to thy wild waste tract!
Treeless, herbless, lifeless mountain! What matter if slacked
My speed may hardly be, for homage to crag and to cave
No deity deigns to drape with verdure? at least I can breathe,
Fear in thee no fraud from the blind, no lie from the mute!"

Such my cry as, rapid, I ran over Parnes' ridge;
Gully and gap I clambered and cleared till, sudden, a bar
Jutted, a stoppage of stone against me, blocking the way.
Right! for I minded the hollow to traverse, the fissure across:
"Where I could enter, there I depart by! Night in the fosse?
Athens to aid? Though the dive were through Erebos, thus I obey —
Out of the day dive, into the day as bravely arise! No bridge
Better!" — when — ha! what was it I came on, of wonders that are?

There, in the cool of a cleft, sat he — majestical Pan!
Ivy drooped wanton, kissed his head, moss cushioned his hoof:
All the great god was good in the eyes grave-kindly — the curl
Carved on the bearded cheek, amused at a mortal's awe,
As, under the human trunk, the goat-thighs grand I saw.
"Halt, Pheidippides!" — halt I did, my brain of a whirl:
"Hither to me! Why pale in my presence?" he gracious began:
"How is it, — Athens, only in Hellas, holds me aloof?

"Athens, she only, rears me no fane, makes me no feast!
Wherefore? Than I what godship to Athens more helpful of old?
Ay, and still, and forever her friend! Test Pan, trust me!
Go, bid Athens take heart, laugh Persia to scorn, have faith

In the temples and tombs! Go, say to Athens, 'The Goat-God saith:
When Persia — so much as strews not the soil — is cast in the sea,
Then praise Pan who fought in the ranks with your most and least,
Goat-thigh to greaved-thigh, made one cause with the free and the bold!'

"Say Pan saith: 'Let this, foreshowing the place, be the pledge!'"
(Gay, the liberal hand held out this herbage I bear
— Fennel — I grasped it a-tremble with dew — whatever it bode)
"While, as for thee" . . . But enough! He was gone. If I ran hitherto —
Be sure that, the rest of my journey, I ran no longer, but flew.
Parnes to Athens — earth no more, the air was my road:
Here am I back. Praise Pan, we stand no more on the razor's edge!
Pan for Athens, Pan for me! I too have a guerdon rare!

Then spoke Miltiades. "And thee, best runner of Greece,
Whose limbs did duty indeed, — what gift is promised thyself?
Tell it us straightway, — Athens the mother demands of her son!"
Rosily blushed the youth: he paused: but, lifting at length
His eyes from the ground, it seemed as he gathered the rest of his strength
Into the utterance — "Pan spoke thus: 'For what thou hast done
Count on a worthy reward! Henceforth be allowed thee release
From the racer's toil, no vulgar reward in praise or in pelf!'

"I am bold to believe, Pan means reward the most to my mind!
Fight I shall, with our foremost, wherever this fennel may grow, —
Pound — Pan helping us — Persia to dust, and, under the deep,
Whelm her away forever; and then, — no Athens to save, —
Marry a certain maid, I know keeps faith to the brave, —
Hie to my house and home: and, when my children shall creep
Close to my knees, — recount how the God was awful yet kind,
Promised their sire reward to the full — rewarding him — so!"

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Unforeseeing one! Yes, he fought on the Marathon day:
So, when Persia was dust, all cried "To Akropolis!
Run, Pheidippides, one race more! the meed is thy due!
'Athens is saved, thank Pan,' go shout!" He flung down his shield,
Ran like fire once more: and the space 'twixt the Fennel-field
And Athens was stubble again, a field which a fire runs through,
Till in he broke: "Rejoice, we conquer!" Like wine through clay,
Joy in his blood bursting his heart, he died — the bliss!

So, to this day, when friend meets friend, the word of salute
Is still "Rejoice!" — his word which brought rejoicing indeed.
So is Pheidippides happy forever, — the noble strong man
Who could race like a god, bear the face of a god, whom a god loved so well;
He saw the land saved he had helped to save, and was suffered to tell
Such tidings, yet never decline, but, gloriously as he began,
So to end gloriously — once to shout, thereafter be mute:
"Athens is saved!" — Pheidippides dies in the shout for his meed.

HALBERT AND HOB.

Here is a thing that happened. Like wild beasts whelped, for den,
In a wild part of North England, there lived once two wild men
Inhabiting one homestead, neither a hovel nor hut,
Time out of mind their birthright: father and son, these — but —
Such a son, such a father! Most wildness by degrees
Softens away: yet, last of their line, the wildest and worst were these.

Criminals, then? Why, no: they did not murder and rob;
But, give them a word, they returned a blow — old Halbert as young Hob:
Harsh and fierce of word, rough and savage of deed,
Hated or feared the more — who knows? — the genuine wild-beast breed.

Thus were they found by the few sparse folk of the country-side;
But how fared each with other? E'en beasts couch, hide by hide,

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In a growling, grudged agreement: so, father and son aye curled
The closelier up in their den because the last of their kind in the world.

Still, beast irks beast on occasion. One Christmas night of snow,
Came father and son to words — such words! more cruel because the blow
To crown each word was wanting, while taunt matched gibe, and curse
Competed with oath in wager, like pastime in hell, — nay, worse:
For pastime turned to earnest, as up there sprang at last
The son at the throat of the father, seized him and held him fast.

"Out of this house you go!" (there followed a hideous oath) —
"This even where now we bake, too hot to hold us both!
If there 's snow outside, there 's coolness: out with you, bide a spell
In the drift and save the sexton the charge of a parish shell!"

Now, the old trunk was tough, was solid as stump of oak
Untouched at the core by a thousand years: much less had its seventy broke
One whipcord nerve in the muscly mass from neck to shoulder-blade
Of the mountainous man, whereon his child's rash hand like a feather weighed.
Nevertheless at once did the mammoth shut his eyes,
Drop chin to breast, drop hands to sides, stand stiffened — arms and thighs
All of a piece — struck mute, much as a sentry stands,
Patient to take the enemy's fire: his captain so commands.

Whereat the son's wrath flew to fury at such sheer scorn
Of his puny strength by the giant eld thus acting the babe new-born:
And "Neither will this turn serve!" yelled he. "Ont with you! Trundle, log!
If you cannot tramp and trudge like a man, try all-fours like a dog!"

Still the old man stood mute. So, logwise, — down to floor
Pulled from his fireside place, dragged on from hearth to door, —

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Was he pushed, a very log, staircase along, until
A certain turn in the steps was reached, a yard from the house-door-sill.

Then the father opened eyes — each spark of their rage extinct, —
Temples, late black, dead-blanched, — right-hand with left-hand linked, —
He faced his son submissive; when slow the accents came,
They were strangely mild though his son's rash hand on his neck lay all the same.

"Hob, on just such a night of a Christmas long ago,
For such a cause, with such a gesture, did I drag — so —
My father down thus far: but, softening here, I heard
A voice in my heart, and stopped: you wait for an outer word.

"For your own sake, not mine, soften you too! Untrod
Leave this last step we reach, nor brave the finger of God!
I dared not pass its lifting: I did well. I nor blame
Nor praise you. I stopped here: and, Hob, do you the same!"

Straightway the son relaxed his hold of the father's throat.
They mounted, side by side, to the room again: no note
Took either of each, no sign made each to either: last
As first, in absolute silence, their Christmas-night they passed.

At dawn, the father sate on, dead, in the selfsame place,
With an outburst blackening still the old bad fighting-face:
But the son crouched all a-tremble like any lamb new-yeaned.

When he went to the burial, someone's staff he borrowed, — tottered and leaned.
But his lips were loose, not locked, — kept muttering, mumbling. "There!
At his cursing and swearing!" the youngsters cried: but the elders thought "In prayer."
A boy threw stones: he picked them up and stored them in his vest.

So tottered, muttered, mumbled he, till he died, perhaps found rest.
"Is there a reason in nature for these hard hearts?" O Lear,
That a reason out of nature must turn them soft, seems clear!

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IVÀN IVÀNOVITCH.

"THEY tell me, your carpenters," quoth I to my friend the Russ,
"Make a simple hatchet serve as a tool-box serves with us.
Arm but each man with his axe, 't is a hammer and saw and plane
And chisel, and — what know I else? We should imitate in vain
The mastery wherewithal, by a flourish of just the adze,
He cleaves, clamps, dovetails in, — no need of our nails and brads, —
The manageable pine: 't is said he could shave himself
With the axe, — so all adroit, now a giant and now an elf,
Does he work and play at once!"

Quoth my friend the Russ to me,
"Ay, that and more beside on occasion! It scarce may be
You never heard tell a tale told children, time out of mind,
By father and mother and nurse, for a moral that 's behind,
Which children quickly seize. If the incident happened at all,
We place it in Peter's time when hearts were great not small,
Germanized, Frenchified. I wager 't is old to you
As the story of Adam and Eve, and possibly quite as true."

In the deep of our land, 't is said, a village from out the woods
Emerged on the great main-road 'twixt two great solitudes.
Through forestry right and left, black verst and verst of pine,
From village to village runs the road's long wide bare line.
Clearance and clearance break the else-unconquered growth
Of pine and all that breeds and broods there, leaving loth
Man's inch of masterdom, — spot of life, spirt of fire, —
To star the dark and dread, lest right and rule expire
Throughout the monstrous wild a-hungered to resume
Its ancient sway, suck back the world into its womb:
Defrauded by man's craft which clove from North to South
This highway broad and straight e'en from the Neva's mouth
To Moscow's gates of gold. So, spot of life and spirt
Of fire aforesaid, burn, each village death-begirt
By wall and wall of pine — unprobed undreamed abyss.

Early one winter morn, in such a village as this,
Snow-whitened everywhere except the middle road
Ice-roughed by track of sledge, there worked by his abode
Ivàn Ivànovitch, the carpenter, employed
On a huge shipmast trunk; his axe now trimmed and toyed

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With branch and twig, and now some chop athwart the bole
Changed bole to billets, bared at once the sap and soul.
About him, watched the work his neighbors sheepskin-clad;
Each bearded mouth puffed steam, each gray eye twinkled glad
To see the sturdy arm which, never stopping play,
Proved strong man's blood still boils, freeze winter as he may.

Sudden, a burst of bells. Out of the road, on edge
Of the hamlet — horse's hoofs galloping. "How, a sledge?
What 's here?" cried all as — in, up to the open space,
Workyard and market-ground, folk's common meeting-place, —
Stumbled on, till he fell, in one last bound for life,
A horse: and, at his heels, a sledge held — "Dmìtri's wife!
Back without Dmìtri too! and children — where are they?
Only a frozen corpse!"

. They drew it forth: then — "Nay,
Not dead, though like to die! Gone hence a month ago:
Home again, this rough jaunt — alone through night and snow —
What can the cause be? Hark — Droug, old horse, how he groans:
His day 's done! Chafe away, keep chafing, for she moans:
She 's coming to! Give here: see, motherkin, your friends!
Cheer up, all safe at home! Warm inside makes amends
For outside cold, — sup quick! Don't look as we were bears!
What is it startles you? What strange adventure stares
Up at us in your face? You know friends — which is which?
I 'm Vàssili, he 's Sergèi, Ivàn Ivànovitch" . . .

At the word, the woman's eyes, slow-wandering till they neared
The blue eyes o'er the bush of honey-colored beard,
Took in full light and sense and — torn to rags, some dream
Which hid the naked truth — O loud and long the scream
She gave, as if all power of voice within her throat
Poured itself wild away to waste in one dread note!
Then followed gasps and sobs, and then the steady flow
Of kindly tears: the brain was saved, a man might know.
Down fell her face upon the good friend's propping knee;
His broad hands smoothed her head, as fain to brush it free
From fancies, swarms that stung like bees unhived. He soothed —
"Loukèria, Loùscha!" — still he, fondling, smoothed and smoothed.
At last her lips formed speech.
"Ivàn, dear — you indeed!
You, just the same dear you! While I . . . O intercede,

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Sweet Mother, with thy Son Almighty — let his might
Bring yesterday once more, undo all done last night!
But this time yesterday, Ivàn, I sat like you,
A child on either knee, and, dearer than the two,
A babe inside my arms, close to my heart — that 's lost
In morsels o'er the snow! Father, Son, Holy Ghost,
Cannot you bring again my blessed yesterday?"

When no more tears would flow, she told her tale: this way.
"Maybe, a month ago, — was it not? — news came here,
They wanted, deeper down, good workmen fit to rear
A church and roof it in. 'We 'll go,' my husband said:
'None understands like me to melt and mould their lead.'
So, friends here helped us off — Ivàn, dear, you the first!
How gay we jingled forth, all five — (my heart will burst) —
While Dmìtri shook the reins, urged Droug upon his track!

"Well, soon the month ran out, we just were coming back,
When yesterday — behold, the village was on fire!
Fire ran from house to house. What help, as, nigh and nigher,
The flames came furious? 'Haste,' cried Dmìtri, 'men must do
The little good man may: to sledge and in with you,
You and our three! We check the fire by laying flat
Each building in its path, — I needs must stay for that, —
But you . . . no time for talk! Wrap round you every rug,
Cover the couple close, — you 'll have the babe to hug.
No care to guide old Droug, he knows his way, by guess,
Once start him on the road: but chirrup, none the less!
The snow lies glib as glass and hard as steel, and soon
You 'll have rise, fine and full, a marvel of a moon.
Hold straight up, all the same, this lighted twist of pitch!
Once home and with our friend Ivàn Ivànovitch,
All 's safe: I have my pay in pouch, all 's right with me,
So I but find as safe you and our precious three!
Off, Droug!' — because the flames had reached us, and the men
Shouted 'But lend a hand, Dmìtri — as good as ten!'

"So, in we bundled — I, and those God gave me once;
Old Droug, that 's stiff at first, seemed youthful for the nonce:
He understood the case, galloping straight ahead.
Out came the moon: my twist soon dwindled, feebly red
In that unnatural day — yes, daylight, bred between
Moonlight and snow-light, lamped those grotto-depths which screen
Such devils from God's eye. Ah, pines, how straight you grow,
Nor bend one pitying branch, true breed of brutal snow!

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Some undergrowth had served to keep the devils blind
While we escaped outside their border!

"Was that — wind?
Anyhow, Droug starts, stops, back go his ears, he snuffs,
Snorts, — never such a snort! then plunges, knows the sough 's
Only the wind: yet, no — our breath goes up too straight!
Still the low sound, — less low, loud, louder, at a rate
There 's no mistaking more! Shall I lean out — look — learn
The truth whatever it be? Pad, pad! At last, I turn —

"'T is the regular pad of the wolves in pursuit of the life in the sledge!
An army they are: close-packed they press like the thrust of a wedge:
They increase as they hunt: for I see, through the pine-trunks ranged each side,
Slip forth new fiend and fiend, make wider and still more wide
The four-footed steady advance. The foremost — none may pass:
They are elders and lead the line, eye and eye — green-glowing brass!
But a long way distant still. Droug, save us! He does his best:
Yet they gain on us, gain, till they reach, — one reaches . . . How utter the rest?
O that Satan-faced first of the band! How he lolls out the length of his tongue,
How he laughs and lets gleam his white teeth! He is on me, his paws pry among
The wraps and the rugs! O my pair, my twin-pigeons, lie still and seem dead!
Stepàn, he shall never have you for a meal, — here 's your mother instead!
No, he will not be counselled — must cry, poor Stiòpka, so foolish! though first
Of my boy-brood, he was not the best: nay, neighbors have called him the worst:
He was puny, an undersized slip, — a darling to me, all the same!
But little there was to be praised in the boy, and a plenty to blame.
I loved him with heart and soul, yes — but, deal him a blow for a fault,
He would sulk for whole days. 'Foolish boy! lie still or the villain will vault,
Will snatch you from over my head!' No use! he cries, screams, — who can hold

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Fast a boy in a frenzy of fear! It follows — as I foretold!
The Satan-face snatched and snapped: I tugged, I tore — and then
His brother too needs must shriek! If one must go, 't is men
The Tsar needs, so we hear, not ailing boys! Perhaps
My hands relaxed their grasp, got tangled in the wraps:
God, he was gone! I looked: there tumbled the cursed crew,
Each fighting for a share: too busy to pursue!
That 's so far gain at least: Droug, gallop another verst,
Or two, or three — God sends we beat them, arrive the first!
A mother who boasts two boys was ever accounted rich:
Some have not a boy: some have, but lose him, — God knows which
Is worse: how pitiful to see your weakling pine
And pale and pass away! Strong brats, this pair of mine!

"O misery! for while I settle to what near seems
Content, I am 'ware again of the tramp, and again there gleams —
Point and point — the line, eyes, levelled green brassy fire!
So soon is resumed your chase? Will nothing appease, naught tire
The furies? And yet I think — I am certain the race is slack,
And the numbers are nothing like. Not a quarter of the pack!
Feasters and those full-fed are staying behind . . . Ah why?
We 'll sorrow for that too soon! Now, — gallop, reach home, and die,
Nor ever again leave house, to trust our life in the trap
For life — we call a sledge! Teriòscha, in my lap!
Yes, I 'll lie down upon you, tight-tie you with the strings
Here — of my heart! No fear, this time, your mother flings . . .
Flings? I flung? Never! But think! — a woman, after all,
Contending with a wolf! Save you I must and shall,
Terentiì!
"How now? What, you still head the race,
Your eyes and tongue and teeth crave fresh food, Satan-face?
There and there! Plain I struck green fire out! Flash again?
All a poor fist can do to damage eyes proves vain!
My fist — why not crunch that? He is wanton for . . . O God,
Why give this wolf his taste? Common wolves scrape and prod
The earth till out they scratch some corpse — mere putrid flesh!
Why must this glutton leave the faded, choose the fresh?
Terentiì — God, feel! — his neck keeps fast thy bag
Of holy things, saints' bones, this Satan-face will drag
Forth, and devour along with him, our Pope declared
The relics were to save from danger!

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" Spurned, not spared !
T was through my arms, crossed arms, he — nuzzling now with snout,
Now ripping, tooth and claw — plucked, pulled Terentiì out,
A prize indeed ! I saw — how could I else but see ? —
My precious one — I bit to hold back — pulled from me !
Up came the others, fell to dancing — did the imps ! —
Skipped as they scampered round. There 's one is gray, and limps :
Who knows but old bad Màrpha — she always owed me spite
And envied me my births — skulks out of doors at night
And turns into a wolf, and joins the sisterhood,
And laps the youthful life, then slinks from out the wood,
Squats down at door by dawn, spins there demure as erst
— No strength, old crone, — not she ! — to crawl forth half a verst !

" Well, I escaped with one : 'twixt one and none there lies
The space 'twixt heaven and hell. And see, a rose-light dyes
The endmost snow : 't is dawn, 't is day, 't is safe at home !
We have outwitted you ! Ay, monsters, snarl and foam,
Fight each the other fiend, disputing for a share, —
Forgetful, in your greed, our finest off we bear,
Tough Droug and I, — my babe, my boy that shall be man,
My man that shall be more, do all a hunter can
To trace and follow and find and catch and crucify
Wolves, wolfkins, all your crew ! A thousand deaths shall die
The whimperingest cub that ever squeezed the teat !
' Take that ! ' we 'll stab you with, — ' the tenderness we met
When, wretches, you danced round, — not this, thank God — not this !
Hellhounds, we balk you ! '

" But — Ah, God above ! — Bliss, bliss —
Not the band, no ! And yet — yes, for Droug knows him ! One —
This only of them all has said ' She saves a son ! '
His fellows disbelieve such luck : but he believes,
He lets them pick the bones, laugh at him in their sleeves :
He 's off and after us, — one speck, one spot, one ball
Grows bigger, bound on bound, — one wolf as good as all !
O but I know the trick ! Have at the snaky tongue !
That 's the right way with wolves ! Go, tell your mates I wrung
The panting morsel out, left you to howl your worst !
Now for it — now ! Ah me ! I know him — thrice-accurst
Satan-face, — him to the end my foe !

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"All fight 's in vain :
This time the green brass points pierce to my very brain.
I fall — fall as I ought — quite on the babe I guard :
I overspread with flesh the whole of him. Too hard
To die this way, torn piecemeal? Move hence? Not I — one inch!
Gnaw through me, through and through : flat thus I lie nor flinch!
O God, the feel of the fang furrowing my shoulder! — see!
It grinds — it grates the bone. O Kìrill under me,
Could I do more? Besides he knew wolf's way to win :
I clung, closed round like wax : yet in he wedged and in,
Past my neck, past my breasts, my heart, until . . . how feels
The onion-bulb your knife parts, pushing through its peels,
Till out you scoop its clove wherein lie stalk and leaf
And bloom and seed unborn?

"That slew me : yes, in brief,
I died then, dead I lay doubtlessly till Droug stopped
Here, I suppose. I come to life, I find me propped
Thus, — how or when or why — I know not. Tell me, friends,
All was a dream : laugh quick and say the nightmare ends!
Soon I shall find my house : 't is over there : in proof,
Save for that chimney heaped with snow, you 'd see the roof
Which holds my three — my two — my one — not one?

"Life 's mixed
With misery, yet we live — must live. The Satan fixed
His face on mine so fast, I took its print as pitch
Takes what it cools beneath. Ivàn Ivànovitch,
'T is you unharden me, you thaw, disperse the thing!
Only keep looking kind, the horror will not cling.
Your face smooths fast away each print of Satan. Tears
— What good they do! Life's sweet, and all its after-years,
Ivàn Ivànovitch, I owe you! Yours am I!
May God reward you, dear!"

Down she sank. Solemnly
Ivàn rose, raised his axe, — for fitly, as she knelt,
Her head lay : well-apart, each side, her arms hung, — dealt
Lightning-swift thunder-strong one blow — no need of more!
Headless she knelt on still : that pine was sound at core
(Neighbors were used to say) — cast-iron-kernelled — which
Taxed for a second stroke Ivàn Ivànovitch.

The man was scant of words as strokes. "It had to be :
I could no other : God it was, bade 'Act for me!'"

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Then stooping, peering round — what is it now he lacks?
A proper strip of bark wherewith to wipe his axe.
Which done, he turns, goes in, closes the door behind.
The others mute remain, watching the blood-snake wind
Into a hiding-place among the splinter-heaps.

At length, still mute, all move: one lifts — from where it steeps
Redder each ruddy rag of pine — the head: two more
Take up the dripping body: then, mute still as before,
Move in a sort of march, march on till marching ends
Opposite to the church; where halting, — who suspends,
By its long hair, the thing, deposits in its place
The piteous head: once more the body shows no trace
Of harm done: there lies whole the Loùscha, maid and wife
And mother, loved until this latest of her life.
Then all sit on the bank of snow which bounds a space
Kept free before the porch for judgment: just the place!

Presently all the souls, man, woman, child, which make
The village up, are found assembling for the sake
Of what is to be done. The very Jews are there:
A Gypsy-troop, though bound with horses for the Fair,
Squats with the rest. Each heart with its conception seethes
And simmers, but no tongue speaks: one may say, — none breathes.

Anon from out the church totters the Pope — the priest —
Hardly alive, so old, a hundred years at least.
With him, the Commune's head, a hoary senior too,
Stàrosta, that 's his style, — like Equity Judge with you, —
Natural Jurisconsult: then, fenced about with furs,
Pomeschìk, — Lord of the Land, who wields — and none demurs —
A power of life and death. They stoop, survey the corpse.

Then, straightened on his staff, the Stàrosta — the thorpe's
Sagaciousest old man — hears what you just have heard,
From Droug's first inrush, all, up to Ivàn's last word —
"God bade me act for him: I dared not disobey!"

Silence — the Pomeschìk broke with "A wild wrong way
Of righting wrong — if wrong there were, such wrath to rouse!
Why was not law observed? What article allows
Whoso may please to play the judge, and, judgment dealt,
Play executioner, as promptly as we pelt
To death, without appeal, the vermin whose sole fault

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Has been — it dared to leave the darkness of its vault,
Intrude upon our day! Too sudden and too rash!
What was this woman's crime? Suppose the church should crash
Down where I stand, your lord: bound are my serfs to dare
Their utmost that I 'scape: yet, if the crashing scare
My children — as you are, — if sons fly, one and all,
Leave father to his fate, — poor cowards though I call
The runaways, I pause before I claim their life
Because they prized it more than mine. I would each wife
Died for her husband's sake, each son to save his sire:
'T is glory, I applaud — scarce duty, I require.
Ivàn Ivànovitch has done a deed that 's named
Murder by law and me: who doubts, may speak unblamed!"

All turned to the old Pope. "Ay, children, I am old —
How old, myself have got to know no longer. Rolled
Quite round, my orb of life, from infancy to age,
Seems passing back again to youth. A certain stage
At least I reach, or dream I reach, where I discern
Truer truths, laws behold more lawlike than we learn
When first we set our foot to tread the course I trod
With man to guide my steps: who leads me now is God.
'Your young men shall see visions:' and in my youth I saw
And paid obedience to man's visionary law:
'Your old men shall dream dreams:' and, in my age, a hand
Conducts me through the cloud round law to where I stand
Firm on its base, — know cause, who, before, knew effect.

"The world lies under me: and nowhere I detect
So great a gift as this — God's own — of human life.
'Shall the dead praise thee?' No! 'The whole live world is rife,
God, with thy glory,' rather! Life then, God's best of gifts,
For what shall man exchange? For life — when so he shifts
The weight and turns the scale, lets life for life restore
God's balance, sacrifice the less to gain the more,
Substitute — for low life, another's or his own —
Life large and liker God's who gave it: thus alone
May life extinguish life that life may trulier be!
How low this law descends on earth, is not for me
To trace: complexed becomes the simple, intricate
The plain, when I pursue law's winding. 'T is the straight
Outflow of law I know and name: to law, the fount
Fresh from God's footstool, friends, follow while I remount.

"A mother bears a child: perfection is complete
So far in such a birth. Enabled to repeat

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The miracle of life, — herself was born so just
A type of womankind, that God sees fit to trust
Her with the holy task of giving life in turn.
Crowned by this crowning pride, how say you, should she spurn
Regality — discrowned, unchilded, by her choice
Of barrenness exchanged for fruit which made rejoice
Creation, though life's self were lost in giving birth
To life more fresh and fit to glorify God's earth?
How say you, should the hand God trusted with life's torch
Kindled to light the world — aware of sparks that scorch,
Let fall the same? Forsooth, her flesh a fire-flake stings:
The mother drops the child! Among what monstrous things
Shall she be classed? Because of motherhood, each male
Yields to his partner place, sinks proudly in the scale:
His strength owned weakness, wit — folly, and courage — fear.
Beside the female proved male's mistress — only here.
The fox-dam, hunger-pined, will slay the felon sire
Who dares assault her whelp: the beaver, stretched on fire,
Will die without a groan: no pang avails to wrest
Her young from where they hide — her sanctuary breast.
What 's here then? Answer me, thou dead one, as, I trow,
Standing at God's own bar, he bids thee answer now!
Thrice crowned wast thou — each crown of pride, a child — thy charge!
Where are they? 'Lost? Enough: no need that thou enlarge
On how or why the loss: life left to utter 'lost'
Condemns itself beyond appeal. The soldier's post
Guards from the foe's attack the camp he sentinels:
That he no traitor proved, this and this only tells —
Over the corpse of him trod foe to foe's success.
Yet — one by one thy crowns torn from thee — thou no less
To scare the world, shame God, — livedst! I hold He saw
The unexampled sin, ordained the novel law,
Whereof first instrument was first intelligence
Found loyal here. I hold that, failing human sense,
The very earth had oped, sky fallen, to efface
Humanity's new wrong, motherhood's first disgrace.
Earth oped not, neither fell the sky, for prompt was found
A man and man enough, head-sober and heart-sound,
Ready to hear God's voice, resolute to obey.
Ivàn Ivànovitch, I hold, has done, this day,
No otherwise than did, in ages long ago,
Moses when he made known the purport of that flow
Of fire athwart the law's twain-tables! I proclaim
Ivàn Ivànovitch God's servant!"
At which name
Uprose that creepy whisper from out the crowd, is wont,

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To swell and surge and sink when fellow-men confront
A punishment that falls on fellow flesh and blood,
Appallingly beheld — shudderingly understood,
No less, to be the right, the just, the merciful.
"God's servant!" hissed the crowd.

When that Amen grew dull
And died away and left acquittal plain adjudged,
"Amen!" last sighed the lord. "There 's none shall say I grudged
Escape from punishment in such a novel case.
Deferring to old age and holy life, — be grace
Granted! say I. No less, scruples might shake a sense
Firmer than I boast mine. Law 's law, and evidence
Of breach therein lies plain, — blood-red-bright, — all may see!
Yet all absolve the deed: absolved the deed must be!

"And next — as mercy rules the hour — methinks 't were well
You signify forthwith its sentence, and dispel
The doubts and fears, I judge, which busy now the head
Law puts a halter round — a halo — you, instead!
Ivàn Ivànovitch — what think you he expects
Will follow from his feat? Go, tell him — law protects
Murder, for once: no need he longer keep behind
The Sacred Pictures — where skulks Innocence enshrined,
Or I missay! Go, some! You others, haste and hide
The dismal object there: get done, whate'er betide!"

So, while the youngers raised the corpse, the elders trooped
Silently to the house: where halting, someone stooped,
Listened beside the door; all there was silent too.
Then they held counsel; then pushed door and, passing through,
Stood in the murderer's presence.
Ivàn Ivànovitch
Knelt, building on the floor that Kremlin rare and rich
He deftly cut and carved on lazy winter nights.
Some five young faces watched, breathlessly, as, to rights,
Piece upon piece, he reared the fabric nigh complete.
Stèscha, Ivàn's old mother, sat spinning by the heat
Of the oven where his wife Kàtia stood baking bread.
Ivàn's self, as he turned his honey-colored head,
Was just in act to drop, 'twixt fir-cones, — each a dome, —
The scooped-out yellow gourd presumably the home
Of Kolokol the Big: the bell, therein to hitch,
— An acorn-cup — was ready: Ivàn Ivànovitch
Turned with it in his mouth.
They told him he was free
As air to walk abroad. "How otherwise?" asked he.

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TRAY.

Sing me a hero! Quench my thirst
Of soul, ye bards!
Quoth Bard the first:
"Sir Olaf, the good knight, did don
His helm and eke his habergeon" . . .
Sir Olaf and his bard ——!

"That sin-scathed brow" (quoth Bard the second),
"That eye wide ope as though Fate beckoned
My hero to some steep, beneath
Which precipice smiled tempting death" . . .
You too without your host have reckoned!

"A beggar-child" (let 's hear this third!)
"Sat on a quay's edge: like a bird
Sang to herself at careless play,
And fell into the stream. 'Dismay!
Help, you the standers-by!' None stirred.

"Bystanders reason, think of wives
And children ere they risk their lives.
Over the balustrade has bounced
A mere instinctive dog, and pounced
Plumb on the prize. 'How well he dives!

"'Up he comes with the child, see, tight
In mouth, alive too, clutched from quite
A depth of ten feet — twelve, I bet!
Good dog! What, off again? There 's yet
Another child to save? All right!

"'How strange we saw no other fall!
It 's instinct in the animal.
Good dog! But he 's a long while under:
If he got drowned I should not wonder —
Strong current, that against the wall!

"'Here he comes, holds in mouth this time
— What may the thing be? Well, that 's prime!
Now, did you ever? Reason reigns
In man alone, since all Tray's pains
Have fished — the child's doll from the slime!'

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"And so, amid the laughter gay,
Trotted my hero off, — old Tray, —
Till somebody, prerogatived
With reason, reasoned: 'Why he dived,
His brain would show us, I should say.

"'John, go and catch — or, if needs be,
Purchase — that animal for me!
By vivisection, at expense
Of half-an-hour and eighteenpence,
How brain secretes dog's soul, we 'll see!'"

NED BRATTS.

'T was Bedford Special Assize, one daft Midsummer's Day:
A broiling blasting June, — was never its like, men say.
Corn stood sheaf-ripe already, and trees looked yellow as that;
Ponds drained dust-dry, the cattle lay foaming around each flat.
Inside town, dogs went mad, and folk kept bibbing beer,
While the parsons prayed for rain. 'T was horrible, yes — but queer:
Queer — for the sun laughed gay, yet nobody moved a hand
To work one stroke at his trade: as given to understand
That all was come to a stop, work and such worldly ways,
And the world's old self about to end in a merry blaze.
Midsummer's Day moreover was the first of Bedford Fair;
With Bedford Town's tag-rag and bobtail a-bowsing there.

But the Court House, Quality crammed: through doors ope, windows wide,
High on the Bench you saw sit Lordships side by side.
There frowned Chief Justice Jukes, fumed learned Brother Small,
And fretted their fellow Judge: like threshers, one and all,
Of a reek with laying down the law in a furnace. Why?
Because their lungs breathed flame — the regular crowd for bye —
From gentry pouring in — quite a nosegay, to be sure!
How else could they pass the time, six mortal hours endure
Till night should extinguish day, when matters might haply mend?
Meanwhile no bad resource was — watching begin and end
Some trial for life and death, in a brisk five minutes' space,
And betting which knave would 'scape, which hang, from his sort of face.

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So, their Lordships toiled and moiled, and a deal of work was done
(I warrant) to justify the mirth of the crazy sun,
As this and t'other lout, struck dumb at the sudden show
Of red robes and white wigs, boggled nor answered "Boh!"
When asked why he, Tom Styles, should not — because Jack Nokes
Had stolen the horse — be hanged: for Judges must have their jokes,
And louts must make allowance — let 's say, for some blue fly
Which punctured a dewy scalp where the frizzles stuck awry —
Else Tom had fleered scot-free, so nearly over and done
Was the main of the job. Full-measure, the gentles enjoyed their fun,
As a twenty-five were tried, rank puritans caught at prayer
In a cow-house and laid by the heels, — have at 'em, devil may care! —
And ten were prescribed the whip, and ten a brand on the cheek,
And five a slit of the nose — just leaving enough to tweak.

Well, things at jolly high-tide, amusement steeped in fire,
While noon smote fierce the roof's red tiles to heart's desire,
The Court a-simmer with smoke, one ferment of oozy flesh,
One spirituous humming musk mount-mounting until its mesh
Entoiled all heads in a fluster, and Serjeant Postlethwayte
— Dashing the wig oblique as he mopped his oily pate —
Cried "Silence, or I grow grease! No loophole lets in air?
Jurymen, — Guilty, Death! Gainsay me if you dare!"
— Things at this pitch, I say, — what hubbub without the doors?
What laughs, shrieks, hoots and yells, what rudest of uproars?

Bounce through the barrier throng a bulk comes rolling vast!
Thumps, kicks, — no manner of use! — spite of them rolls at last
Into the midst a ball, which, bursting, brings to view
Publican Black Ned Bratts and Tabby his big wife too:
Both in a muck-sweat, both . . . were never such eyes uplift
At the sight of yawning hell, such nostrils — snouts that sniffed
Sulphur, such mouths agape ready to swallow flame!
Horrified, hideous, frank fiend-faces! yet, all the same,
Mixed with a certain . . . eh? how shall I dare style — mirth
The desperate grin of the guess that, could they break from earth,
Heaven was above, and hell might rage in impotence
Below the saved, the saved!

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"Confound you! (no offence!)
Out of our way, — push, wife! Yonder their Worships be!"
Ned Bratts has reached the bar, and "Hey, my Lords," roars he,
"A Jury of life and death, Judges the prime of the land,
Constables, javelineers, — all met, if I understand,
To decide so knotty a point as whether 't was Jack or Joan
Robbed the henroost, pinched the pig, hit the King's Arms with a stone,
Dropped the baby down the well, left the tithesman in the lurch,
Or, three whole Sundays running, not once attended church!
What a pother — do these deserve the parish-stocks or whip,
More or less brow to brand, much or little nose to snip, —
When, in our Public, plain stand we — that 's we stand here,
I and my Tab, brass-bold, brick-built of beef and beer,
— Do not we, slut? Step forth and show your beauty, jade!
Wife of my bosom — that 's the word now! What a trade
We drove! None said us nay: nobody loved his life
So little as wag a tongue against us, — did they, wife?
Yet they knew us all the while, in their hearts, for what we are
— Worst couple, rogue and quean, unhanged — search near and far!
Eh, Tab? The peddler, now — o'er his noggin — who warned a mate
To cut and run, nor risk his pack where its loss of weight
Was the least to dread, — aha, how we two laughed a-good
As, stealing round the midden, he came on where I stood
With billet poised and raised, — you, ready with the rope, —
Ah, but that 's past, that 's sin repented of, we hope!
Men knew us for that same, yet safe and sound stood we!
The lily-livered knaves knew too (I 've balked a d——)
Our keeping the 'Pied Bull' was just a mere pretence:
Too slow the pounds make food, drink, lodging, from out the pence!
There 's not a stoppage to travel has chanced, this ten long year,
No break into hall or grange, no lifting of nag or steer,
Not a single roguery, from the clipping of a purse
To the cutting of a throat, but paid us toll. Od's curse!
When Gypsy Smouch made bold to cheat us of our due,
— Eh, Tab? the Squire's strong-box we helped the rascal to —
I think he pulled a face, next Sessions' swinging-time!
He danced the jig that needs no floor, — and, here 's the prime,
T was Scroggs that boughed the mare! Ay, those were busy days!

"Well, there we flourished brave, like scripture-trees called bays,
Faring high, drinking hard, in money up to head

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— Not to say, boots and shoes, when . . . Zounds, I nearly said —
Lord, to unlearn one's language! How shall we labor, wife?
Have you, fast hold, the Book? Grasp, grip it, for your life!
See, sirs, here 's life, salvation! Here 's — hold but out my breath —
When did I speak so long without once swearing? 'Sdeath,
No, nor unhelped by ale since man and boy! And yet
All yesterday I had to keep my whistle wet
While reading Tab this Book: book? don't say 'book'— they 're plays,
Songs, ballads, and the like: here 's no such strawy blaze,
But sky wide ope, sun, moon, and seven stars out full-flare!
Tab, help and tell! I 'm hoarse. A mug! or — no, a prayer!
Dip for one out of the Book! Who wrote it in the Jail
— He plied his pen unhelped by beer, sirs, I 'll be bail!

"I 've got my second wind. In trundles she — that 's Tab.
'Why, Gammer, what 's come now, that — bobbing like a crab
On Yule-tide bowl — your head 's a-work and both your eyes
Break loose? Afeard, you fool? As if the dead can rise!
Say — Bagman Dick was found last May with fuddling-cap
Stuffed in his mouth: to choke 's a natural mishap!'
'Gaffer, be — blessed,' cries she, 'and Bagman Dick as well!
I, you, and he are damned: this Public is our hell:
We live in fire: live coals don't feel! — once quenched, they learn —
Cinders do, to what dust they moulder while they burn!'

"'If you don't speak straight out,' says I — belike I swore —
'A knobstick, well you know the taste of, shall, once more,
Teach you to talk, my maid!' She ups with such a face,
Heart sunk inside me. 'Well, pad on, my prate-apace!'

"'I 've been about those laces we need for . . . never mind!
If henceforth they tie hands, 't is mine they 'll have to bind.
You know who makes them best — the Tinker in our cage,
Pulled-up for gospelling, twelve years ago: no age
To try another trade, — yet, so he scorned to take
Money he did not earn, he taught himself the make
Of laces, tagged and tough — Dick Bagman found them so!
Good customers were we! Well, last week, you must know,
His girl, — the blind young chit, who hawks about his wares, —
She takes it in her head to come no more — such airs
These hussies have! Yet, since we need a stoutish lace, —
"I 'll to the jail-bird father, abuse her to his face!"
So, first I filled a jug to give me heart, and then,

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Primed to the proper pitch, I posted to their den —
Patmore, they style their prison! I tip the turnkey, catch
My heart up, fix my face, and fearless lift the latch —
Both arms akimbo, in bounce with a good round oath
Ready for rapping out: no "Lawks" nor "By my troth!"

"'There sat my man, the father. He looked up: what one feels
When heart that leapt to mouth drops down again to heels!
He raised his hand . . . Hast seen, when drinking out the night,
And in, the day, earth grow another something quite
Under the sun's first stare? I stood a very stone.

"'"Woman!" (a fiery tear he put in every tone),
"How should my child frequent your house where lust is sport,
Violence — trade? Too true! I trust no vague report.
Her angel's hand, which stops the sight of sin, leaves clear
The other gate of sense, lets outrage through the ear.
What has she heard! — which, heard shall never be again.
Better lack food than feast, a Dives in the — wain
Or reign or train — of Charles!" (His language was not ours:
'T is my belief, God spoke: no tinker has such powers.)
"Bread, only bread they bring — my laces: if we broke
Your lump of leavened sin, the loaf's first crumb would choke!"

"'Down on my marrow-bones! Then all at once rose he:
His brown hair burst a-spread, his eyes were suns to see:
Up went his hands: "Through flesh, I reach, I read thy soul!
So may some stricken tree look blasted, bough and bole,
Champed by the fire-tooth, charred without, and yet, thrice-bound
With dreriment about, within may life be found,
A prisoned power to branch and blossom as before,
Could but the gardener cleave the cloister, reach the core,
Loosen the vital sap: yet where shall help be found?
Who says 'How save it?' — nor 'Why cumbers it the ground?'
Woman, that tree art thou! All sloughed about with scurf,
Thy stag-horns fright the sky, thy snake-roots sting the turf!
Drunkenness, wantonness, theft, murder gnash and gnarl
Thine outward, case thy soul with coating like the marle
Satan stamps flat upon each head beneath his hoof!
And how deliver such? The strong men keep aloof,
Lover and friend stand far, the mocking ones pass by,
Tophet gapes wide for prey: lost soul, despair and die!
What then? 'Look unto me and be ye saved!' saith God:
'I strike the rock, outstreats the life-stream at my rod!*

* They did not eat
His flesh, nor suck these oils which thence outstreat.

DONNE'S *Progress of the Soul*, line 344.

Google

Be your sins scarlet, wool shall they seem like, — although
As crimson red, yet turn white as the driven snow!'"

"'There, there, there! All I seem to somehow understand
Is — that, if I reached home, 't was through the guiding hand
Of his blind girl which led and led me through the streets
And out of town and up to door again. What greets
First thing my eye, as limbs recover from their swoon?
A book — this Book she gave at parting. "Father's boon —
The Book he wrote: it reads as if he spoke himself:
He cannot preach in bonds, so, — take it down from shelf
When you want counsel, — think you hear his very voice!

"'Wicked dear Husband, first despair and then rejoice!
Dear wicked Husband, waste no tick of moment more,
Be saved like me, bald trunk! There 's greenness yet at core,
Sap under slough! Read, read!'

"Let me take breath, my lords!
I 'd like to know, are these — hers, mine, or Bunyan's words?
I 'm 'wildered — scarce with drink, — nowise with drink alone!
You 'll say, with heat: but heat 's no stuff to split a stone
Like this black boulder — this flint heart of mine: the Book —
That dealt the crashing blow! Sirs, here 's the fist that shook
His beard till Wrestler Jem howled like a just-lugged bear!
You had brained me with a feather: at once I grew aware
Christmas was meant for me. A burden at your back,
Good Master Christmas? Nay, — yours was that Joseph's sack,
— Or whose it was, — which held the cup, — compared with mine!
Robbery loads my loins, perjury cracks my chine,
Adultery . . . nay, Tab, you pitched me as I flung!
One word, I 'll up with fist . . . No, sweet spouse, hold your tongue!

I 'm hasting to the end. The Book, sirs — take and read!
You have my history in a nutshell, — ay, indeed!
It must off, my burden! See, — slack straps and into pit,
Roll, reach the bottom, rest, rot there — a plague on it!
For a mountain 's sure to fall and bury Bedford Town,
'Destruction' — that 's the name, and fire shall burn it down!
O 'scape the wrath in time! Time 's now, if not too late.
How can I pilgrimage up to the wicket-gate?
Next comes Despond the slough: not that I fear to pull
Through mud, and dry my clothes at brave House Beautiful —
But it 's late in the day, I reckon: had I left years ago

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Town, wife, and children dear . . . Well, Christmas did, you know! —
Soon I had met in the valley and tried my cudgel's strength
On the enemy horned and winged, a-straddle across its length!
Have at his horns, thwick — thwack: they snap, see! Hoof and hoof —
Bang, break the fetlock-bones! For love's sake, keep aloof
Angels! I 'm man and match, — this cudgel for my flail, —
To thresh him, hoofs and horns, bat's wing and serpent's tail!
A chance gone by! But then, what else does Hopeful ding
Into the deafest ear except — hope, hope 's the thing?
Too late i' the day for me to thrid the windings: but
There 's still a way to win the race by death's short cut!
Did Master Faithful need climb the Delightful Mounts?
No, straight to Vanity Fair, — a fair, by all accounts,
Such as is held outside, — lords, ladies, grand and gay, —
Says he in the face of them, just what you hear me say.
And the Judges brought him in guilty, and brought him out
To die in the market-place — St. Peter's Green 's about
The same thing: there they flogged, flayed, buffeted, lanced with knives,
Pricked him with swords, — I 'll swear, he 'd full a cat's nine lives, —
So to his end at last came Faithful, — ha, ha, he!
Who holds the highest card? for there stands hid, you see,
Behind the rabble-rout, a chariot, pair and all:
He 's in, he 's off, he 's up, through clouds, at trumpet-call,
Carried the nearest way to Heaven-gate! Odds my life —
Has nobody a sword to spare? not even a knife?
Then hang me, draw and quarter! Tab — do the same by her!
O Master Worldly-Wiseman . . . that 's Master Interpreter,
Take the will, not the deed! Our gibbet 's handy, close:
Forestall Last Judgment-Day! Be kindly, not morose!
There wants no earthly judge-and-jurying: here we stand —
Sentence our guilty selves: so, hang us out of hand!
Make haste for pity's sake! A single moment's loss
Means — Satan 's lord once more: his whisper shoots across
All singing in my heart, all praying in my brain,
'It comes of heat and beer!' — hark how he guffaws plain!
'To-morrow you 'll wake bright, and, in a safe skin, hug
Your sound selves, Tab and you, over a foaming jug!
You 've had such qualms before, time out of mind!' He 's right!
Did not we kick and cuff and curse away, that night
When home we blindly reeled, and left poor humpback Joe
I' the lurch to pay for what . . . somebody did, you know!
Both of us maundered then, 'Lame humpback, — never more

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Will he come limping, drain his tankard at our door!
He 'll swing, while — somebody' . . . Says Tab, 'No, for
I 'll peach!'
'I 'm for you, Tab,' cries I, 'there 's rope enough for each!'
So blubbered we, and bussed, and went to bed upon
The grace of Tab's good thought: by morning, all was gone!
We laughed — 'What 's life to him, a cripple of no account?'
Oh, waves increase around — I feel them mount and mount!
Hang us! To-morrow brings Tom Bearward with his bears:
One new black-muzzled brute beats Sackerson, he swears:
(Sackerson, for my money!) And, baiting o'er, the Brawl
They lead on Turner's Patch, — lads, lasses, up tails all, —
I 'm i' the thick o' the throng! That means the Iron Cage,
— Means the Lost Man inside! Where 's hope for such as
wage
War against light? Light 's left, light 's here, I hold light still,
So does Tab — make but haste to hang us both! You will?"

I promise, when he stopped you might have heard a mouse
Squeak, such a death-like hush sealed up the old Mote House.
But when the mass of man sank meek upon his knees,
While Tab, alongside, wheezed a hoarse "Do hang us, please!"
Why, then the waters rose, no eye but ran with tears,
Hearts heaved, heads thumped, until, paying all past arrears
Of pity and sorrow, at last a regular scream outbroke
Of triumph, joy, and praise.

My Lord Chief Justice spoke,
First mopping brow and cheek, where still, for one that budged,
Another bead broke fresh: "What Judge, that ever judged
Since first the world began, judged such a case as this?
Why, Master Bratts, long since, folks smelt you out, I wis!
I had my doubts, i' faith, each time you played the fox
Convicting geese of crime in yonder witness-box —
Yea, much did I misdoubt, the thief that stole her eggs
Was hardly goosey's self at Reynard's game, i' feggs!
Yet thus much was to praise — you spoke to point, direct —
Swore you heard, saw the theft: no jury could suspect —
Dared to suspect, — I 'll say, — a spot in white so clear:
Goosey was throttled, true: but thereof godly fear
Came of example set, much as our laws intend;
And, though a fox confessed, you proved the Judge's friend.
What if I had my doubts? Suppose I gave them breath,
Brought you to bar: what work to do, ere 'Guilty, Death'
Had paid our pains! What heaps of witnesses to drag
From holes and corners, paid from out the County's bag!

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Trial three dog-days long! *Amicus Curiæ* — that 's
Your title, no dispute — truth-telling Master Bratts!
Thank you, too, Mistress Tab! Why doubt one word you say?
Hanging you both deserve, hanged both shall be this day!
The tinker needs must be a proper man. I 've heard
He lies in Jail long since: if Quality's good word
Warrants me letting loose, — some householder, I mean —
Freeholder, better still, — I don't say but — between
Now and next Sessions . . . Well! Consider of his case,
I promise to, at least: we owe him so much grace.
Not that — no, God forbid! — I lean to think, as you,
The grace that such repent is any jail-bird's due:
I rather see the fruit of twelve years' pious reign —
Astræa Redux, Charles restored his rights again!
— Of which, another time! I somehow feel a peace
Stealing across the world. May deeds like this increase!
So, Master Sheriff, stay that sentence I pronounced
On those two dozen odd: deserving to be trounced
Soundly, and yet . . . well, well, at all events dispatch
This pair of — shall I say, sinner-saints? — ere we catch
Their jail-distemper too. Stop tears, or I 'll indite
All weeping Bedfordshire for turning Bunyanite!"

So, forms were galloped through. If Justice, on the spur,
Proved somewhat expeditious, would Quality demur?
And happily hanged were they, — why lengthen out my tale? —
Where Bunyan's Statue stands facing where stood his Jail

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DRAMATIC IDYLS

SECOND SERIES

[1880]

"You are sick, that 's sure," — they say:
"Sick of what?" — they disagree.
"'T is the brain," — thinks Doctor A;
"'T is the heart," — holds Doctor B;
"The liver — my life I 'd lay!"
"The lungs!" "The lights!"
Ah me!
So ignorant of man's whole
Of bodily organs plain to see —
So sage and certain, frank and free,
About what 's under lock and key —
Man's soul!

ECHETLOS.

HERE is a story, shall stir you! Stand up, Greeks dead and gone,
Who breasted, beat Barbarians, stemmed Persia rolling on,
Did the deed and saved the world, for the day was Marathon!

No man but did his manliest, kept rank and fought away
In his tribe and file: up, back, out, down — was the spear-arm play:
Like a wind-whipt branchy wood, all spear-arms a-swing that day!

But one man kept no rank, and his sole arm plied no spear,
As a flashing came and went, and a form i' the van, the rear,
Brightened the battle up, for he blazed now there, now here.

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Nor helmed nor shielded, he! but, a goat-skin all his wear,
Like a tiller of the soil, with a clown's limbs broad and bare,
Went he ploughing on and on: he pushed with a ploughman's share.

Did the weak mid-line give way, as tunnies on whom the shark
Precipitates his bulk? Did the right-wing halt when, stark
On his heap of slain lay stretched Kallimachos Polemarch?

Did the steady phalanx falter? To the rescue, at the need,
The clown was ploughing Persia, clearing Greek earth of weed,
As he routed through the Sakian and rooted up the Mede.

But the deed done, battle won, — nowhere to be descried
On the meadow, by the stream, at the marsh, — look, far and wide
From the foot of the mountain, no, to the last blood-plashed sea-side, —

Not anywhere on view blazed the large limbs thonged and brown,
Shearing and clearing still with the share before which — down
To the dust went Persia's pomp, as he ploughed for Greece, that clown!

How spake the Oracle? "Care for no name at all!
Say but just this: 'We praise one helpful whom we call
The Holder of the Ploughshare.' The great deed ne'er grows small."

Not the great name! Sing — woe for the great name Miltiadés
And its end at Paros isle! Woe for Themistokles
— Satrap in Sardis court! Name not the clown like these!

CLIVE.

I AND Clive were friends — and why not? Friends! I think you laugh, my lad.
Clive it was gave England India, while your father gives — egad,
England nothing but the graceless boy who lures him on to speak —
"Well, Sir, you and Clive were comrades —" with a tongue thrust in your cheek!

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Very true: in my eyes, your eyes, all the world's eyes, Clive was man,
I was, am, and ever shall be — mouse, nay, mouse of all its clan
Sorriest sample, if you take the kitchen's estimate for fame;
While the man Clive — he fought Plassy, spoiled the clever foreign game,
Conquered and annexed and Englished!

Never mind! As o'er my punch
(You away) I sit of evenings, — silence, save for biscuit crunch,
Black, unbroken, — thought grows busy, thrids each pathway of old years,
Notes this forthright, that meander, till the long-past life appears
Like an outspread map of country plodded through, each mile and rood,
Once, and well remembered still, — I 'm startled in my solitude
Ever and anon by — what 's the sudden mocking light that breaks
On me as I slap the table till no rummer-glass but shakes
While I ask — aloud, I do believe, God help me! — "Was it thus?
Can it be that so I faltered, stopped when just one step for us —"
(Us, — you were not born, I grant, but surely some day born would be)
" — One bold step had gained a province " (figurative talk, you see)
"Got no end of wealth and honor, — yet I stood stock-still no less?"
— "For I was not Clive," you comment: but it needs no Clive to guess
Wealth were handy, honor ticklish, did no writing on the wall
Warn me "Trespasser, 'ware man-traps!" Him who braves that notice — call
Hero! none of such heroics suit myself who read plain words,
Doff my hat, and leap no barrier. Scripture says, the land 's the Lord's:
Louts then — what avail the thousand, noisy in a smock-frocked ring,
All-agog to have me trespass, clear the fence, be Clive their king?
Higher warrant must you show me ere I set one foot before
T' other in that dark direction, though I stand forevermore
Poor as Job and meek as Moses. Evermore? No! By and by
Job grows rich and Moses valiant, Clive turns out less wise than I.

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Don't object "Why call him friend, then?" Power is power, my boy, and still
Marks a man, — God's gift magnific, exercised for good or ill.
You've your boot now on my hearth-rug, tread what was a tiger's skin:
Rarely such a royal monster as I lodged the bullet in!
'True, he murdered half a village, so his own death came to pass;
Still, for size and beauty, cunning, courage — ah, the brute he was!
Why, that Clive, — that youth, that greenhorn, that quill-driving clerk, in fine, —
He sustained a siege in Arcot . . . But the world knows! Pass the wine.

Where did I break off at? How bring Clive in? Oh, you mentioned "fear"!
Just so: and, said I, that minds me of a story you shall hear.

We were friends then, Clive and I: so, when the clouds, about the orb
Late supreme, encroaching slowly, surely, threatened to absorb
Ray by ray its noontide brilliance, — friendship might, with steadier eye
Drawing near, bear what had burned else, now no blaze all majesty.
Too much bee's-wing floats my figure? Well, suppose a castle's new:
None presume to climb its ramparts, none find foothold sure for shoe
'Twixt those squares and squares of granite plating the impervious pile
As his scale-mail's warty iron cuirasses a crocodile.
Reels that castle thunder-smitten, storm-dismantled? From without
Scrambling up by crack and crevice, every cockney prates about
Towers — the heap he kicks now! turrets — just the measure of his cane!
Will that do? Observe moreover — (same similitude again) —
Such a castle seldom crumbles by sheer stress of cannonade:
'T is when foes are foiled and fighting 's finished that vile rains invade,
Grass o'ergrows, o'ergrows till night-birds congregating find no holes
Fit to build in like the topmost sockets made for banner-poles.
So Clive crumbled slow in London, crashed at last.

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A week before,
Dining with him, — after trying churchyard-chat of days of yore, —
Both of us stopped, tired as tombstones, head-piece foot-piece, when they lean
Each to other, drowsed in fog-smoke, o'er a coffined Past between.
As I saw his head sink heavy, guessed the soul's extinguishment
By the glazing eyeball, noticed how the furtive fingers went
Where a drug-box skulked behind the honest liquor, — "One more throw
Try for Clive!" thought I: "Let 's venture some good rattling question!" So —
"Come Clive, tell us" — out I blurted — "what to tell in turn, years hence,
When my boy — suppose I have one — asks me on what evidence
I maintain my friend of Plassy proved a warrior every whit
Worth your Alexanders, Cæsars, Marlboroughs and — what said Pitt? —
Frederick the Fierce himself! Clive told me once" — I want to say —
"Which feat out of all those famous doings bore the bell away
— In his own calm estimation, mark you, not the mob's rough guess —
Which stood foremost as evincing what Clive called courageousness!
Come! what moment of the minute, what speck-centre in the wide
Circle of the action saw your mortal fairly deified?
(Let alone that filthy sleep-stuff, swallow bold this wholesome Port!)
If a friend has leave to question, — when were you most brave, in short?"

Up he arched his brows o' the instant — formidably Clive again.
"When was I most brave? I 'd answer, were the instance half as plain
As another instance that 's a brain-lodged crystal — curse it! — here
Freezing when my memory touches — ugh! — the time I felt most fear.
Ugh! I cannot say for certain if I showed fear — anyhow,
Fear I felt, and, very likely, shuddered, since I shiver now."

"Fear!" smiled I. "Well, that 's the rarer: that 's a specimen to seek,

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Ticket up in one's museum, *Mind-Freaks, Lord Clive's Fear, Unique!*"

Down his brows dropped. On the table painfully he pored as though
Tracing, in the stains and streaks there, thoughts encrusted long ago.
When he spoke 't was like a lawyer reading word by word some will,
Some blind jungle of a statement, — beating on and on until
Out there leaps fierce life to fight with.
"This fell in my factor-days.
Desk-drudge, slaving at St. David's, one must game, or drink, or craze.
I chose gaming: and, — because your high-flown gamesters hardly take
Umbrage at a factor's elbow if the factor pays his stake, —
I was winked at in a circle where the company was choice,
Captain This and Major That, men high of color, loud of voice,
Yet indulgent, condescending to the modest juvenile
Who not merely risked but lost his hard-earned guineas with a smile.

"Down I sat to cards, one evening, — had for my antagonist
Somebody whose name 's a secret — you 'll know why — so, if you list,
Call him Cock o' the Walk, my scarlet son of Mars from head to heel!
Play commenced: and, whether Cocky fancied that a clerk must feel
Quite sufficient honor came of bending over one green baize,
I the scribe with him the warrior, guessed no penman dared to raise
Shadow of objection should the honor stay but playing end
More or less abruptly, — whether disinclined he grew to spend
Practice strictly scientific on a booby born to stare
At — not ask of — lace-and-ruffles if the hand they hide plays fair, —
Anyhow, I marked a movement when he bade me 'Cut!'
"I rose.
'Such the new manœuvre, Captain? I 'm a novice: knowledge grows.
What, you force a card, you cheat, Sir?'
"Never did a thunder-clap
Cause emotion, startle Thyrsis locked with Chloe in his lap,
As my word and gesture (down I flung my cards to join the pack)

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Fired the man of arms, whose visage, simply red before, turned
black.
When he found his voice, he stammered 'That expression once
again!'

"'Well, you forced a card and cheated!'

"'Possibly a factor's brain,
Busied with his all-important balance of accounts, may deem
Weighing words superfluous trouble: *cheat* to clerkly ears may
seem
Just the joke for friends to venture: but we are not friends, you
see!
When a gentleman is joked with, — if he 's good at repartee,
He rejoins, as do I — Sirrah, on your knees, withdraw in full!
Beg my pardon, or be sure a kindly bullet through your skull
Lets in light and teaches manners to what brain it finds! Choose
quick —
Have your life snuffed out or, kneeling, pray me trim yon can-
dle-wick!'

"'Well, you cheated!'
"Then outbroke a howl from all the friends around.
To his feet sprang each in fury, fists were clenched and teeth
were ground.
'End it! no time like the present! Captain, yours were our
disgrace!
No delay, begin and finish! Stand back, leave the pair a
space!
Let civilians be instructed: henceforth simply ply the pen,
Fly the sword! This clerk 's no swordsman? Suit him with a
pistol, then!
Even odds! A dozen paces 'twixt the most and least expert
Make a dwarf a giant's equal: nay, the dwarf, if he 's alert,
Likelier hits the broader target!'
"Up we stood accordingly.
As they handed me the weapon, such was my soul's thirst to
try
Then and there conclusions with this bully, tread on and stamp
out
Every spark of his existence, that, — crept close to, curled about
By that toying tempting teasing fool-forefinger's middle joint, —
Don't you guess? — the trigger yielded. Gone my chance! and
at the point
Of such prime success moreover: scarce an inch above his head
Went my ball to hit the wainscot. He was living, I was dead.

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"Up he marched in flaming triumph — 't was his right, mind!
— up, within
Just an arm's length. 'Now, my clerkling,' chuckled Cocky with a grin
As the levelled piece quite touched me, 'Now, Sir Counting-House, repeat
That expression which I told you proved bad manners! Did I cheat?'

"'Cheat you did, you knew you cheated, and, this moment, know as well.
As for me, my homely breeding bids you — fire and go to Hell!'

"Twice the muzzle touched my forehead. Heavy barrel, flurried wrist,
Either spoils a steady lifting. Thrice: then, 'Laugh at Hell who list,
I can't! God 's no fable either. Did this boy's eye wink once? No!
There 's no standing him and Hell and God all three against me, — so,
I did cheat!'
"And down he threw the pistol, out rushed — by the door
Possibly, but, as for knowledge if by chimney, roof or floor,
He effected disappearance — I 'll engage no glance was sent
That way by a single starer, such a blank astonishment
Swallowed up their senses: as for speaking — mute they stood as mice.

"Mute not long, though! Such reaction, such a hubbub in a trice!
'Rogue and rascal! Who 'd have thought it? What 's to be expected next,
When His Majesty's Commission serves a sharper as pretext
For . . . But where 's the need of wasting time now? Naught requires delay:
Punishment the Service cries for: let disgrace be wiped away
Publicly, in good broad daylight! Resignation? No, indeed!
Drum and fife must play the Rogue's-March, rank and file be free to speed
Tardy marching on the rogue's part by appliance in the rear
— Kicks administered shall right this wronged civilian, — never fear,
Mister Clive, for — though a clerk — you bore yourself — suppose we say —
Just as would beseem a soldier!'

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"'Gentlemen, attention — pray!
First, one word!'
"I passed each speaker severally in review.
When I had precise their number, names and styles, and fully knew
Over whom my supervision thenceforth must extend, — why, then —

"'Some five minutes since, my life lay — as you all saw, gentlemen —
At the mercy of your friend there. Not a single voice was raised
In arrest of judgment, not one tongue — before my powder blazed —
Ventured "Can it be the youngster blundered, really seemed to mark
Some irregular proceeding? We conjecture in the dark,
Guess at random, — still, for sake of fair play — what if for a freak,
In a fit of absence, — such things have been! — if our friend proved weak
— What's the phrase? — corrected fortune! Look into the case, at least!"
Who dared interpose between the altar's victim and the priest?
Yet he spared me! You eleven! Whosoever, all or each,
To the disadvantage of the man who spared me, utters speech
— To his face, behind his back, — that speaker has to do with me:
Me who promise, if positions change and mine the chance should be,
Not to imitate your friend and waive advantage!'
"Twenty-five
Years ago this matter happened: and 't is certain," added Clive,
"Never, to my knowledge, did Sir Cocky have a single breath
Breathed against him: lips were closed throughout his life, or since his death,
For if he be dead or living I can tell no more than you.
All I know is — Cocky had one chance more; how he used it, — grew
Out of such unlucky habits, or relapsed, and back again
Brought the late-ejected devil with a score more in his train, —
That's for you to judge. Reprieval I procured, at any rate.
Ugh — the memory of that minute's fear makes gooseflesh rise! Why prate
Longer? You've my story, there's your instance: fear I did you see!"

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"Well" — I hardly kept from laughing — "if I see it, thanks must be
Wholly to your Lordship's candor. Not that — in a common case —
When a bully caught at cheating thrusts a pistol in one's face,
I should under-rate, believe me, such a trial to the nerve!
'T is no joke, at one-and-twenty, for a youth to stand nor swerve.
Fear I naturally look for — unless, of all men alive,
I am forced to make exception when I come to Robert Clive.
Since at Arcot, Plassy, elsewhere, he and death — the whole world knows —
Came to somewhat closer quarters."

Quarters? Had we come to blows,
Clive and I, you had not wondered — up he sprang so, out he rapped
Such a round of oaths — no matter! I 'll endeavor to adapt
To our modern usage words he — well, 't was friendly license — flung
At me like so many fire-balls, fast as he could wag his tongue.

"You — a soldier? You — at Plassy? Yours the faculty to nick
Instantaneously occasion when your foe, if lightning-quick,
— At his mercy, at his malice, — has you, through some stupid inch
Undefended in your bulwark? Thus laid open, — not to flinch
— That needs courage, you 'll concede me. Then, look here! Suppose the man,
Checking his advance, his weapon still extended, not a span
Distant from my temple, — curse him! — quietly had bade me, 'There!
Keep your life, calumniator! — worthless life I freely spare:
Mine you freely would have taken — murdered me and my good fame
Both at once — and all the better! Go, and thank your own bad aim
Which permits me to forgive you!' What if, with such words as these,
He had cast away his weapon? How should I have borne me, please?
Nay, I 'll spare you pains and tell you. This, and only this, remained —
Pick his weapon up and use it on myself. I so had gained
Sleep the earlier, leaving England probably to pay on still
Rent and taxes for half India, tenant at the Frenchman's will."

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"Such the turn" said I "the matter takes with you? Then I abate
—No, by not one jot nor tittle, — of your act my estimate.
Fear — I wish I could detect there: courage fronts me, plain enough —
Call it desperation, madness — never mind! for here 's in rough
Why, had mine been such a trial, fear had overcome disgrace.
True, disgrace were hard to bear: but such a rush against God's face
—None of that for me, Lord Plassy, since I go to church at times,
Say the creed my mother taught me! Many years in foreign climes
Rub some marks away — not all, though! We poor sinners reach life's brink,
Overlook what rolls beneath it, recklessly enough, but think
There 's advantage in what 's left us — ground to stand on, time to call
'Lord, have mercy!' ere we topple over — do not leap, that 's all!"
Oh, he made no answer, re-absorbed into his cloud. I caught
Something like "Yes — courage: only fools will call it fear."
If aught
Comfort you, my great unhappy hero Clive, in that I heard,
Next week, how your own hand dealt you doom, and uttered just the word
"Fearfully courageous!" — this, be sure, and nothing else I groaned.
I'm no Clive, nor parson either: Clive's worst deed — we 'll hope condoned.

MULÉYKEH.

If a stranger passed the tent of Hóseyn, he cried "A churl's!"
Or haply "God help the man who has neither salt nor bread!"
—"Nay," would a friend exclaim, "he needs nor pity nor scorn
More than who spends small thought on the shore-sand, picking pearls,
—Holds but in light esteem the seed-sort, bears instead
On his breast a moon-like prize, some orb which of night makes morn.

"What if no flocks and herds enrich the son of Sinán?
They went when his tribe was mulct, ten thousand camels the due.

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Blood-value paid perforce for a murder done of old.
'God gave them, let them go! But never since time began,
Muléykeh, peerless mare, owned master the match of you,
And you are my prize, my Pearl: I laugh at men's land and gold!'

"So in the pride of his soul laughs Hóseyn — and right, I say.
Do the ten steeds run a race of glory? Outstripping all,
Ever Muléykeh stands first steed at the victor's staff.
Who started, the owner's hope, gets shamed and named, that day.
'Silence,' or, last but one, is 'The Cuffed,' as we use to call
Whom the paddock's lord thrusts forth. Right, Hóseyn, I say, to laugh!"

"Boasts he Muléykeh the Pearl?" the stranger replies: "Be sure
On him I waste nor scorn nor pity, but lavish both
On Duhl the son of Sheybán, who withers away in heart
For envy of Hóseyn's luck. Such sickness admits no cure.
A certain poet has sung, and sealed the same with an oath,
'For the vulgar — flocks and herds! The Pearl is a prize apart.'"

Lo, Duhl the son of Sheybán comes riding to Hóseyn's tent,
And he casts his saddle down, and enters and "Peace! bids he.
"You are poor, I know the cause: my plenty shall mend the wrong.
'T is said of your Pearl — the price of a hundred camels spent
In her purchase were scarce ill paid: such prudence is far from me
Who proffer a thousand. Speak! Long parley may last too long."

Said Hóseyn, "You feed young beasts a many, of famous breed,
Slit-eared, unblemished, fat, true offspring of Múzennem:
There stumbles no weak-eyed she in the line as it climbs the hill.
But I love Muléykeh's face: her forefront whitens indeed
Like a yellowish wave's cream-crest. Your camels — go gaze on them!
Her fetlock is foam-splashed too. Myself am the richer still."

A year goes by: lo, back to the tent again rides Duhl.
"You are open-hearted, ay — moist-handed, a very prince.
Why should I speak of sale? Be the mare your simple gift!
My son is pined to death for her beauty: my wife prompts 'Fool,

Beg for his sake the Pearl! Be God the rewarder, since
God pays debts seven for one: who squanders on Him shows thrift.'"

Said Hóseyn, "God gives each man one life, like a lamp, then gives
That lamp due measure of oil: lamp lighted — hold high, wave wide
Its comfort for others to share! once quench it, what help is left?
The oil of your lamp is your son: I shine while Muléykeh lives.
Would I beg your son to cheer my dark if Muléykeh died?
It is life against life: what good avails to the life-bereft?"

Another year, and — hist! What craft is it Duhl designs?
He alights not at the door of the tent as he did last time,
But, creeping behind, he gropes his stealthy way by the trench
Half-round till he finds the flap in the folding, for night combines
With the robber — and such is he: Duhl, covetous up to crime,
Must wring from Hóseyn's grasp the Pearl, by whatever the wrench.

"He was hunger-bitten, I heard: I tempted with half my store,
And a gibe was all my thanks. Is he generous like Spring dew?
Account the fault to me who chaffered with such an one!
He has killed, to feast chance comers, the creature he rode: nay, more —
For a couple of singing-girls his robe has he torn in two:
I will beg! Yet I nowise gained by the tale of my wife and son.

"I swear by the Holy House, my head will I never wash
Till I filch his Pearl away. Fair dealing I tried, then guile,
And now I resort to force. He said we must live or die:
Let him die, then, — let me live! Be bold — but not too rash!
I have found me a peeping-place: breast, bury your breathing while
I explore for myself! Now, breathe! He deceived me not, the spy!

"As he said — there lies in peace Hóseyn — how happy! Beside
Stands tethered the Pearl: thrice winds her headstall about his wrist:
'T is therefore he sleeps so sound — the moon through the roof reveals.
And, loose on his left, stands too that other, known far and wide,
Buhéyseh, her sister born: fleet is she yet ever missed
The winning tail's fire-flash a-stream past the thunderous heels.

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"No less she stands saddled and bridled, this second, in case some thief
Should enter and seize and fly with the first, as I mean to do.
What then? The Pearl is the Pearl: once mount her we both escape."
Through the skirt-fold in glides Duhl, — so a serpent disturbs no leaf
In a bush as he parts the twigs entwining a nest: clean through
He is noiselessly at his work: as he planned, he performs the rape.

He has set the tent-door wide, has buckled the girth, has clipped
The headstall away from the wrist he leaves thrice bound as before,
He springs on the Pearl, is launched on the desert like bolt from bow.
Up starts our plundered man: from his breast though the heart be ripped,
Yet his mind has the mastery: behold, in a minute more,
He is out and off and away on Buhéyseh, whose worth we know!

And Hóseyn — his blood turns flame, he has learned long since to ride,
And Buhéyseh does her part, — they gain — they are gaining fast
On the fugitive pair, and Duhl has Ed-Dárraj to cross and quit,
And to reach the ridge El-Sabán, — no safety till that be spied!
And Buhéyseh is, bound by bound, but a horse-length off at last,
For the Pearl has missed the tap of the heel, the touch of the bit.

She shortens her stride, she chafes at her rider the strange and queer:
Buhéyseh is mad with hope — beat sister she shall and must,
Though Duhl, of the hand and heel so clumsy, she has to thank.
She is near now, nose by tail — they are neck by croup — joy! fear!
What folly makes Hóseyn shout "Dog Duhl, Damned son of the Dust,
Touch the right ear and press with your foot my Pearl's left flank!"

And Duhl was wise at the word, and Muléykeh as prompt perceived
Who was urging redoubled pace, and to hear him was to obey,
And a leap indeed gave she, and evanished forevermore.
And Hóseyn looked one long last look as who, all bereaved,

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Looks, fain to follow the dead so far as the living may:
Then he turned Buhéyseh's neck slow homeward, weeping sore.

And, lo, in the sunrise, still sat Hóseyn upon the ground
Weeping: and neighbors came, the tribesmen of Bénu-Asád
In the vale of green Er-Rass, and they questioned him of his grief;
And he told from first to last how, serpent-like, Duhl had wound
His way to the nest, and how Duhl rode like an ape, so bad!
And how Buhéyseh did wonders, yet Pearl remained with the thief.

And they jeered him, one and all: "Poor Hóseyn is crazed past hope!
How else had he wrought himself his ruin, in fortune's spite?
To have simply held the tongue were a task for a boy or girl,
And here were Muléykeh again, the eyed like an antelope,
The child of his heart by day, the wife of his breast by night!" —
"And the beaten in speed!" wept Hóseyn. "You never have loved my Pearl."

PIETRO OF ABANO.

Petrus Aponensis — there was a magician!
When that strange adventure happened, which I mean to tell my hearers,
Nearly had he tried all trades — beside physician,
Architect, astronomer, astrologer, — or worse:
How else, as the old books warrant, was he able,
All at once, through all the world, to prove the promptest of appearers
Where was prince to cure, tower to build as high as Babel,
Star to name or sky-sign read, — yet pouch, for pains, a curse?

— Curse: for when a vagrant, — foot-sore, travel-tattered,
Now a young man, now an old man, Turk or Arab, Jew or Gypsy, —
Proffered folk in passing — O for pay, what mattered? —
"I'll be doctor, I'll play builder, star I'll name — sign read!"
Soon as prince was cured, tower built, and fate predicted,
"Who may you be?" came the question; when he answered "*Petrus ipse*,"
"Just as we divined!" cried folk — "A wretch convicted
Long ago of dealing with the devil — you indeed!"

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So, they cursed him roundly, all his labor's payment,
Motioned him — the convalescent prince would — to vacate the presence:
Babylonians plucked his beard and tore his raiment,
Drove him from that tower he built: while, had he peered at stars,
Town howled "Stone the quack who styles our Dog-star — Sirius!"
Country yelled "Aroint the churl who prophesies we take no pleasance
Under vine and fig-tree, since the year's delirious,
Bears no crop of any kind, — all through the planet Mars!"

Straightway would the whilom youngster grow a grisard,
Or, as case might hap, the hoary eld drop off and show a stripling.
Town and country groaned — indebted to a wizard!
"Curse — nay, kick and cuff him — fit requital of his pains!
Gratitude in word or deed were wasted truly!
Rather make the Church amends by crying out on, cramping, crippling
One who, on pretence of serving man, serves duly
Man's arch foe: not ours, be sure, but Satan's — his the gains!"

Peter grinned and bore it, such disgraceful usage:
Somehow, cuffs and kicks and curses seem ordained his like to suffer:
Prophet's pay with Christians, now as in the Jews' age,
Still is — stoning: so, he meekly took his wage and went,
— Safe again was found ensconced in those old quarters,
Padua's blackest blindest by-street, — none the worse, nay, somewhat tougher:
"Calculating," quoth he, "soon I join the martyrs,
Since, who magnify my lore on burning me are bent." *

Therefore, on a certain evening, to his alley
Peter slunk, all bruised and broken, sore in body, sick in spirit,

* "Studiando le mie cifre col compasso,
Rilevo che sarò presto sotterra,
Perchè del mio saper si fa gran chiasso,
E gl' ignoranti m' hanno mosso guerra."

Said to have been found in a well at Abano in the last century. They were extemporaneously Englished thus: not as Father Prout chose to prefer them:

Studying my ciphers with the compass,
I reckon — I soon shall be below-ground;
Because, of my lore folk make great rumpus,
And war on myself makes each dull rogue round.

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Just escaped from Cairo where he launched a galley
Needing neither sails nor oars nor help of wind or tide,
— Needing but the fume of fire to set aflying
Wheels like mad which whirled you quick — North, South,
where'er you pleased require it, —
That is — would have done so had not priests come prying,
Broke his engine up and bastinadoed him beside.

As he reached his lodging, stopped there unmolested,
(Neighbors feared him, urchins fled him, few were bold enough
to follow)
While his fumbling fingers tried the lock and tested
Once again the queer key's virtue, oped the sullen door, —
Someone plucked his sleeve, cried, "Master, pray your pardon!
Grant a word to me who patient wait you in your archway's
hollow!
Hard on you men's hearts are: be not your heart hard on
Me who kiss your garment's hem, O Lord of magic lore!

"Mage — say I, who no less, scorning tittle-tattle,
To the vulgar give no credence when they prate of Peter's
magic,
Deem his art brews tempest, hurts the crops and cattle,
Hinders fowls from laying eggs and worms from spinning silk,
Rides upon a he-goat, mounts at need a broomstick:
While the price he pays for this (so turns to comic what was
tragic)
Is — he may not drink — dreads like the Day of Doom's tick —
One poor drop of sustenance ordained mere men — that 's milk!

"Tell such tales to Padua! Think me no such dullard!
Not from these benighted parts did I derive my breath and
being!
I am from a land whose cloudless skies are colored
Livelier, suns orb largelier, airs seem incense, — while, on earth —
What, instead of grass, our fingers and our thumbs cull,
Proves true moly! sounds and sights there help the body's hear-
ing, seeing,
Till the soul grows godlike: brief, — you front no numskull
Shaming by ineptitude the Greece that gave him birth!

"Mark within my eye its iris mystic-lettered —
That 's my name! and note my ear — its swan-shaped cavity,
my emblem!
Mine 's the swan-like nature born to fly unfettered
Over land and sea in search of knowledge — food for song.

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Art denied the vulgar! Geese grow fat on barley,
Swans require ethereal provend, undesirous to resemble 'em —
Soar to seek Apollo — favored with a parley
Such as, Master, you grant me — who will not hold you long.

"Leave to learn to sing — for that your swan petitions:
Master, who possess the secret, say not nay to such a suitor!
All I ask is — bless mine, purest of ambitions!
Grant me leave to make my kind wise, free, and happy! How?
Just by making me — as you are mine — their model!
Geese have goose-thoughts: make a swan their teacher first, then coadjutor, —
Let him introduce swan-notions to each noddle, —
Geese will soon grow swans, and men become what I am now!

"That 's the only magic — had but fools discernment,
Could they probe and pass into the solid through the soft and seeming!
Teach me such true magic — now, and no adjournment!
Teach your art of making fools subserve the man of mind!
Magic is the power we men of mind should practise,
Draw fools to become our drudges — docile henceforth, never dreaming —
While they do our hests for fancied gain — the fact is
What they toil and moil to get proves falsehood: truth 's behind!

"See now! you conceive some fabric — say, a mansion
Meet for monarch's pride and pleasure: this is truth — a thought has fired you,
Made you fain to give some cramped concept expansion,
Put your faculty to proof, fulfil your nature's task.
First you fascinate the monarch's self: he fancies
He it was devised the scheme you execute as he inspired you:
He in turn sets slaving insignificances
Toiling, moiling till your structure stands there — all you ask!

"Soon the monarch 's known for what he was — a ninny:
Soon the rabble-rout leave labor, take their work-day wage and vanish:
Soon the late puffed bladder, pricked, shows lank and skinny —
'Who was its inflator?' ask we, 'whose the giant lungs?'
Petri en pulmones! What though men prove ingrates?
Let them — so they stop at crucifixion — buffet, ban and banish'
Peter's power 's apparent: human praise — its din grates
Harsh as blame on ear unused to aught save angels' tongues.

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"Ay, there have been always, since our world existed,
Mages who possessed the secret — needed but to stand still, fix eye
On the foolish mortal: straight was he enlisted
Soldier, scholar, servant, slave — no matter for the style!
Only through illusion; ever what seemed profit —
Love or lucre — justified obedience to the *Ipse dixi:*
Work done — palace reared from pavement up to soffit —
Was it strange if builders smelt out cheating all the while?

"Let them pelt and pound, bruise, bray you in a mortar!
What 's the odds to you who seek reward of quite another nature?
You 've enrolled your name where sages of your sort are,
— Michael of Constantinople, Hans of Halberstadt!
Nay and were you nameless, still you 've your conviction
You it was and only you — what signifies the nomenclature? —
Ruled the world in fact, though how you ruled be fiction
Fit for fools: true wisdom's magic you — if e'er man — had 't!

"But perhaps you ask me, 'Since each ignoramus
While he profits by such magic persecutes the benefactor,
What should I expect but — once I render famous
You as Michael, Hans, and Peter — just one ingrate more?
If the vulgar prove thus, whatsoe'er the pelf be,
Pouched through my beneficence — and doom me dungeoned, chained, or racked, or
Fairly burned outright — how grateful will yourself be
When, his secret gained, you match your — master just before?'

'That 's where I await you! Please, revert a little!
What do folks report about you if not this — which, though chimeric,
Still, as figurative, suits you to a tittle —
That, — although the elements obey your nod and wink,
Fades or flowers the herb you chance to smile or sigh at,
While your frown bids earth quake palled by obscuration atmospheric, —
Brief, although through nature naught resists your *fiat*,
There 's yet one poor substance mocks you — milk you may not drink!

"Figurative language! Take my explanation!
Fame with fear, and hate with homage, these your art procures in plenty.
All 's but daily dry bread: what makes moist the ration?

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Love, the milk that sweetens man his meal — alas, you lack:
I am he who, since he fears you not, can love you.
Love is born of heart not mind, *de corde natus haud de mente;*
Touch my heart and love 's yours, sure as shines above you
Sun by day and star by night though earth should go to wrack!

"Stage by stage you lift me — kiss by kiss I hallow
Whose but your dear hand my helper, punctual as at each new impulse
I approach my aim? Shell chipped, the eaglet callow
Needs a parent's pinion-push to quit the eyrie's edge:
But once fairly launched forth, denizen of ether,
While each effort sunward bids the blood more freely through each limb pulse,
Sure the parent feels, as gay they soar together,
Fully are all pains repaid when love redeems its pledge!"

Then did Peter's tristful visage lighten somewhat,
Vent a watery smile as though inveterate mistrust were thawing.
"Well, who knows?" he slow broke silence. "Mortals — come what
Come there may — are still the dupes of hope there 's luck in store.
Many scholars seek me, promise mounts and marvels:
Here stand I to witness how they step 'twixt me and clapper-clawing!
Dry bread, — that I 've gained me: truly I should starve else:
But of milk, no drop was mine! Well, shuffle cards once more!"

At the word of promise thus implied, our stranger —
What can he but cast his arms, in rapture of embrace, round Peter?
"Hold! I choke!" the mage grunts. "Shall I in the manger
Any longer play the dog? Approach, my calf, and feed!
Bene . . . won't you wait for grace?" But sudden incense
Wool-white, serpent-solid, curled up — perfume growing sweet and sweeter
Till it reached the young man's nose and seemed to win sense
Soul and all from out his brain through nostril: yes, indeed!

Presently the young man rubbed his eyes. "Where am I?
Too much bother over books! Some reverie has proved amusing.
What did Peter prate of? 'Faith, my brow is clammy!
How my head throbs, how my heart thumps! Can *it* be I swooned?

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Oh, I spoke my speech out — cribbed from Plato's tractate,
Dosed him with 'the Fair and Good,' swore — Dog of Egypt — I was choosing
Plato's way to serve men! What 's the hour? Exact eight!
Home now, and to-morrow never mind how Plato mooned!

"Peter has the secret! Fair and Good are products
(So he said) of Foul and Evil: one must bring to pass the other.
Just as poisons grow drugs, steal through sundry odd ducts
Doctors name, and ultimately issue safe and changed.
You 'd abolish poisons, treat disease with dainties
Such as suit the sound and sane? With all such kickshaws vain you pother!
Arsenic 's the stuff puts force into the faint eyes,
Opium sets the brain to rights — by cark and care deranged.

"What, he 's safe within door? — would escape — no question —
Thanks, since thanks and more I owe, and mean to pay in time befitting.
What most presses now is — after night's digestion,
Peter, of thy precepts! — promptest practice of the same.
Let me see! The wise man, first of all, scorns riches:
But to scorn them must obtain them: none believes in his permitting
Gold to lie ungathered: who picks up, then pitches
Gold away — philosophizes: none disputes his claim.

"So with worldly honors: 't is by abdicating,
Incontestably he proves he could have kept the crown discarded.
Sulla cuts a figure, leaving off dictating:
Simpletons laud private life? 'The grapes are sour,' laugh we.
So, again — but why continue? All 's tumultuous
Here: my head 's a-whirl with knowledge. Speedily shall be rewarded
He who taught me! Greeks prove ingrates? So insult you us?
When your teaching bears its first-fruits, Peter — wait and see!"

As the word, the deed proved; ere a brief year's passage,
Fop — that fool he made the jokes on — now he made the jokes for, *gratis:*
Hunks — that hoarder, long left lonely in his crass age —
Found now one appreciative deferential friend:
Powder-paint-and-patch, Hag Jezebel — recovered,
Strange to say, the power to please, got courtship till she cried *Jam satis!*

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Fop be-flattered, Hunks be-friended, Hag be-lovered —
Nobody o'erlooked, save God — he soon attained his end.

As he lounged at ease one morning in his villa,
(Hag 's the dowry) estimated (Hunks' bequest) his coin in coffer,
Mused on how a fool's good word (Fop's word) could fill a
Social circle with his praise, promote him man of mark, —
All at once — "An old friend fain would see your Highness!"
There stood Peter, skeleton and scarecrow, plain writ *Phi-lo-so-pher*
In the woe-worn face — for yellowness and dryness,
Parchment — with a pair of eyes — one hope their feeble spark.

"Did I counsel rightly? Have you, in accordance,
Prospered greatly, dear my pupil? Sure, at just the stage I find you,
When your hand may draw me forth from the mad war-dance
Savages are leading round your master — down, not dead.
Padua wants to burn me: balk them, let me linger
Life out — rueful though its remnant — hid in some safe hole behind you!
Prostrate here I lie: quick, help with but a finger
Lest I house in safety's self — a tombstone o'er my head!

"Lodging, bite and sup, with — now and then — a copper
— Alms for any poorer still, if such there be, — is all my asking.
Take me for your bedesman, — nay, if you think proper,
Menial merely, — such my perfect passion for repose!
Yes, from out your plenty Peter craves a pittance
— Leave to thaw his frozen hands before the fire whereat you 're basking!
Double though your debt were, grant this boon — remittance
He proclaims of obligation: 't is himself that owes!"

"Venerated Master — can it be, such treatment
Learning meets with, magic fails to guard you from, by all appearance?
Strange! for, as you entered, — what the famous feat meant,
I was full of, — why you reared that fabric, Padua's boast.
Nowise for man's pride, man's pleasure, did you slyly
Raise it, but man's seat of rule whereby the world should soon have clearance
(Happy world) from such a rout as now so vilely
Handles you — and hampers me, for which I grieve the most.

"Since if it got wind you now were my familiar,
How could I protect you — nay, defend myself against the rabble?

Wait until the mob, now masters, willy-nilly are
Servants as they should be: then has gratitude full play!
Surely this experience shows how unbefitting
'T is that minds like mine should rot in ease and plenty. Geese may gabble,
Gorge, and keep the ground: but swans are soon for quitting
Earthly fare — as fain would I, your swan, if taught the way.

"Teach me, then, to rule men, have them at my pleasure!
Solely for their good, of course, — impart a secret worth rewarding,
Since the proper life's-prize! Tantalus's treasure
Aught beside proves, vanishes, and leaves no trace at all.
Wait awhile, nor press for payment prematurely!
Over-haste defrauds you. Thanks! since, — even while I speak, — discarding
Sloth and vain delights, I learn how — swiftly, surely —
Magic sways the sceptre, wears the crown and wields the ball!

"Gone again — what, is he? 'Faith, he 's soon disposed of!
Peter's precepts work already, put within my lump their leaven!
Ay, we needs must don glove would we pluck the rose — doff
Silken garment would we climb the tree and take its fruit.
Why sharp thorn, rough rind? To keep unviolated
Either prize! We garland us, we mount from earth to feast in heaven,
Just because exist what once we estimated
Hindrances which, better taught, as helps we now compute.

"Foolishly I turned disgusted from my fellows!
Pits of ignorance — to fill, and heaps of prejudice — to level —
Multitudes in motley, whites and blacks and yellows —
What a hopeless task it seemed to discipline the host!
Now I see my error. Vices act like virtues
— Not alone because they guard — sharp thorns — the rose we first dishevel,
Not because they scrape, scratch — rough rind — through the dirt-shoes
Bare feet cling to bole with, while the half-mooned boot we boast.

"No, my aim is nobler, more disinterested!
Man shall keep what seemed to thwart him, since it proves his true assistance,
Leads to ascertaining which head is the best head,
Would he crown his body, rule its members — lawless else.
Ignorant the horse stares, by deficient vision

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Takes a man to be a monster, lets him mount, then, twice the distance
Horse could trot unridden, gallops — dream Elysian! —
Dreaming that his dwarfish guide 's a giant, — jockeys tell 's."

Brief, so worked the spell, he promptly had a riddance:
Heart and brain no longer felt the pricks which passed for conscience-scruples:
Free henceforth his feet, — *Per Bacco*, how they did dance
Merrily through lets and checks that stopped the way before!
Politics the prize now, — such adroit adviser,
Opportune suggester, with the tact that triples and quadruples
Merit in each measure, — never did the Kaiser
Boast as subject such a statesman, friend, and something more!

As he, up and down, one noonday, paced his closet
— Council o'er, each spark (his hint) blown flame, by colleagues' breath applauded,
Strokes of statecraft hailed with "*Salomo si nôsset!*"
(His the nostrum) — every throw for luck come double-six, —
As he, pacing, hugged himself in satisfaction,
Thump — the door went. "What, the Kaiser? By none else were I defrauded
Thus of well-earned solace. Since 't is fate's exaction, —
Enter, Liege my Lord! Ha, Peter, you here? *Teneor vix!*"

"Ah, Sir, none the less, contain you, nor wax irate!
You so lofty, I so lowly, — vast the space which yawns between us!
Still, methinks, you — more than ever — at a high rate
Needs must prize poor Peter's secret since it lifts you thus.
Grant me now the boon whereat before you boggled!
Ten long years your march has moved — one triumph — (though *e* 's short) — *hactēnus*,
While I down and down disastrously have joggled
Till I pitch against Death's door, the true *Nec Ultra Plus*.

"Years ago — some ten 't is — since I sought for shelter,
Craved in your whole house a closet, out of all your means a comfort.
Now you soar above these: as is gold to spelter
So is power — you urged with reason — paramount to wealth.
Power you boast in plenty: let it grant me refuge!
House-room now is out of question: find for me some stronghold — some fort —
Privacy wherein, immured, shall this blind deaf huge
Monster of a mob let stay the soul I 'd save by stealth!

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"Ay, for all too much with magic have I tampered!
— Lost the world, and gained, I fear, a certain place I'm to describe loth!
Still, if prayer and fasting tame the pride long pampered,
Mercy may be mine: amendment never comes too late.
How can I amend beset by cursers, kickers?
Pluck this brand from out the burning! Once away, I take my Bible-oath,
Never more — so long as life's weak lamp-flame flickers —
No, not once I 'll tease you, but in silence bear my fate!"

"Gently, good my Genius, Oracle unerring!
Strange now! can you guess on what — as in you peeped — it was I pondered?
You and I are both of one mind in preferring
Power to wealth, but — here 's the point — what sort of power, I ask?
Ruling men is vulgar, easy, and ignoble:
Rid yourself of conscience, quick you have at beck and call the fond herd.
But who wields the crozier, down may fling the crow-bill:
That 's the power I covet now; soul's sway o'er souls — my task!

"'Well but,' you object, 'you have it, who by glamour
Dress up lies to look like truths, mask folly in the garb of reason:
Your soul acts on theirs, sure, when the people clamor,
Hold their peace, now fight now fondle, — earwigged through the brains.'
Possibly! but still the operation 's mundane,
Grosser than a taste demands which — craving manna — kecks at peason —
Power o'er men by wants material: why should one deign
Rule by sordid hopes and fears — a grunt for all one's pains?

"No, if men must praise me, let them praise to purpose!
Would we move the world, not earth but heaven must be our fulcrum — *pou sto!*
Thus I seek to move it: Master, why intérpose —
Balk my climbing close on what 's the ladder's topmost round?
Statecraft 't is I step from: when by priestcraft hoisted
Up to where my foot may touch the highest rung which fate allows toe,
Then indeed ask favor. On you shall be foisted
No excuse: I 'll pay my debt, each penny of the pound!

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"Ho, my knaves without there! Lead this worthy downstairs!
No farewell, good Paul — nay, Peter — what 's your name remembered rightly?
Come, he 's humble: out another would have flounced — airs
Suitors often give themselves when our sort bow them forth.
Did I touch his rags? He surely kept his distance:
Yet, there somehow passed to me from him — where'er the virtue might lie —
Something that inspires my soul — Oh, by assistance
Doubtlessly of Peter! — still, he 's worth just what he 's worth!

"'T is my own soul soars now: soaring — how? By crawling!
I 'll to Rome, before Rome's feet the temporal-supreme lay prostrate!
'Hands' (I 'll say) 'proficient once in pulling, hauling
This and that way men as I was minded — feet now clasp!'
Ay, the Kaiser's self has wrung them in his fervor!
Now — they only sue to slave for Rome, nor at one doit the cost rate.
Rome's adopted child — no bone, no muscle, nerve or
Sinew of me but I 'll strain, though out my life I gasp!"

As he stood one evening proudly — (he had traversed
Rome on horseback — peerless pageant! — claimed the Lateran as new Pope) —
Thinking "All 's attained now! Pontiff! Who could have erst
Dreamed of my advance so far when, some ten years ago,
I embraced devotion, grew from priest to bishop,
Gained the Purple, bribed the Conclave, got the Two-thirds, saw my coop ope,
Came out — what Rome hails me! O were there a wish-shop,
Not one wish more would I purchase — lord of all below!

"Ha — who dares intrude now — puts aside the arras?
What, old Peter, here again, at such a time, in such a presence?
Satan sends this plague back merely to embarrass
Me who enter on my office — little needing you!
'Faith, I 'm touched myself by age, but you look Tithon!
Were it vain to seek of you the sole prize left — rejuvenescence?
Well, since flesh is grass which Time must lay his scythe on,
Say your say and so depart and make no more ado!"

Peter faltered — coughing first by way of prologue —
"Holiness, your help comes late: a death at ninety little matters.
Padua, build poor Peter's pyre now, on log roll log,
Burn away — I 've lived my day! Yet here 's the sting in death —

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I've an author's pride: I want my Book's survival:
See, I've hid it in my breast to warm me 'mid the rags and tatters!
Save it — tell next age your Master had no rival!
Scholar's debt discharged in full, be 'Thanks' my latest breath!"

"Faugh, the frowsy bundle — scribblings harum-scarum
Scattered o'er a dozen sheepskins! What's the name of this farrago?
Ha — '*Conciliator Differentiarum*' —
Man and book may burn together, cause the world no loss!
Stop — what else? A tractate — eh, '*De Speciebus Ceremonialis Ma-gi-æ?*' I dream sure! Hence, away, go,
Wizard, — quick avoid me! Vain you clasp my knee, buss
Hand that bears the Fisher's ring or foot that boasts the Cross!

"Help! The old magician clings like an octopus!
Ah, you rise now — fuming, fretting, frowning, if I read your features!
Frown, who cares? We're Pope — once 'Pope, you can't unpope us!
Good — you muster up a smile: that's better! Still so brisk?
All at once grown youthful? But the case is plain! Ass —
Here I dally with the fiend, yet know the Word — compels all creatures
Earthly, heavenly, hellish. *Apage, Sathanas*
Dicam verbum Salomonis—" "*—dicite!*" When — whisk! —

What was changed? The stranger gave his eyes a rubbing:
There smiled Peter's face turned back a moment at him o'er the shoulder,
As the black-door shut, bang! "So he 'scapes a drubbing!"
(Quoth a boy who, unespied, had stopped to hear the talk.)
"That's the way to thank these wizards when they bid men
Benedicite! What ails you? You, a man, and yet no bolder?
Foreign Sir, you look but foolish!" "*Idmen, idmen!*"
Groaned the Greek. "O Peter, cheese at last I know from chalk!"

Peter lived his life out, menaced yet no martyr,
Knew himself the mighty man he was — such knowledge all his guerdon,
Left the world a big book — people but in part err
When they style a true *Scientiæ Com-pen-di-um: Admirationem incutit*" they sourly
Smile, as fast they shut the folio which myself was somehow spurred on

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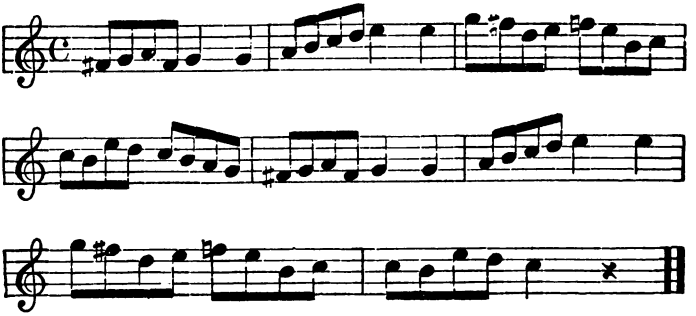
Once to ope: but love — life's milk which daily, hourly,
Blockheads lap — O Peter, still thy taste of love 's to come!

Greek, was your ambition likewise doomed to failure?
True, I find no record you wore purple, walked with axe and fasces,
Played some antipope's part: still, friend, don't turn tail, you 're
Certain, with but these two gifts, to gain earth's prize in time!
Cleverness uncurbed by conscience — if you ransacked
Peter's book you 'd find no potent spell like these to rule the masses;
Nor should want example, had I not to transact
Other business. Go your ways, you 'll thrive! So ends my rhyme.

When these parts Tiberius — not yet Cæsar — travelled,
Passing Padua, he consulted Padua's Oracle of Geryon
(God three-headed, thrice wise) just to get unravelled
Certain tangles of his future. "Fling at Abano
Golden dice," it answered: "dropt within the fount there,
Note what sum the pips present!" And still we see each die, the very one,
Turn up, through the crystal, — read the whole account there
Where 't is told by Suetonius, — each its highest throw.

Scarce the sportive fancy-dice I fling show "Venus:"
Still — for love of that dear land which I so oft in dreams revisit —
I have — oh, not sung! but lilted (as — between us —
Grows my lazy custom) this its legend. What the lilt?



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DOCTOR ——

A Rabbi told me: On the day allowed
Satan for carping at God's rule, he came,
Fresh from our earth, to brave the angel-crowd.

"What is the fault now?" "This I find to blame:
Many and various are the tongues below,
Yet all agree in one speech, all proclaim

"'Hell has no might to match what earth can show:
Death is the strongest-born of Hell, and yet
Stronger than Death is a Bad Wife, we know.'

"Is it a wonder if I fume and fret—
Robbed of my rights, since Death am I, and mine
The style of Strongest? Men pay Nature's debt

"Because they must at my demand; decline
To pay it henceforth surely men will please,
Provided husbands with bad wives combine

"To baffle Death. Judge between me and these!"
"Thyself shalt judge. Descend to earth in shape
Of mortal, marry, drain from froth to lees

"The bitter draught, then see if thou escape
Concluding, with men sorrowful and sage,
A Bad Wife's strength Death's self in vain would ape!"

How Satan entered on his pilgrimage,
Conformed himself to earthly ordinance,
Wived and played husband well from youth to age

Intrepidly — I leave untold, advance
Through many a married year until I reach
A day when — of his father's countenance

The very image, like him too in speech
As well as thought and deed, — the union's fruit
Attained maturity. "I needs must teach

"My son a trade: but trade, such son to suit,
Needs seeking after. He a man of war?
Too cowardly! A lawyer wins repute—

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"Having to toil and moil, though — both which are
Beyond this sluggard. There 's Divinity:
No, that 's my own bread-winner — that be far

"From my poor offspring! Physic? Ha, we 'll try
If this be practicable. Where 's my wit?
Asleep? — since, now I come to think . . . Ay, ay!

"Hither, my son! Exactly have I hit
On a profession for thee. *Medicus* —
Behold, thou art appointed! Yea, I spit

"Upon thine eyes, bestow a virtue thus
That henceforth not this human form I wear
Shalt thou perceive alone, but — one of us

"By privilege — thy fleshly sight shall bear
Me in my spirit-person as I walk
The world and take my prey appointed there.

"Doctor once dubbed — what ignorance shall balk
Thy march triumphant? Diagnose the gout
As colic, and prescribe it cheese for chalk —

"No matter! All 's one: cure shall come about
And win thee wealth — fees paid with such a roar
Of thanks and praise alike from lord and lout

"As never stunned man's ears on earth before.
'How may this be?' Why, that 's my sceptic! Soon
Truth will corrupt thee, soon thou doubt'st no more!

"Why is it I bestow on thee the boon
Of recognizing me the while I go
Invisibly among men, morning, noon,

"And night, from house to house, and — quick or slow —
Take my appointed prey? They summon thee
For help, suppose: obey the summons! so!

"Enter, look round! Where 's Death? Know — I am he,
Satan who work all evil: I who bring
Pain to the patient in whate'er degree.

"I, then, am there: first glance thine eye shall fling
Will find me — whether distant or at hand,
As I am free to do my spiriting

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"At such mere first glance thou shalt understand
Wherefore I reach no higher up the room
Than door or window, when my form is scanned.

"Howe'er friends' faces please to gather gloom,
Bent o'er the sick, — howe'er himself desponds, —
In such case Death is not the sufferer's doom.

"Contrariwise, do friends rejoice my bonds
Are broken, does the captive in his turn
Crow 'Life shall conquer'? Nip these foolish fronds

"Of hope a-sprout, if haply thou discern
Me at the head — my victim's head, be sure!
Forth now! This taught thee, little else to learn!"

And forth he went. Folk heard him ask demure,
"How do you style this ailment? (There he peeps,
My father, through the arras!) Sirs, the cure

"Is plain as A B C! Experience steeps
Blossoms of pennyroyal half an hour
In sherris. *Sumat!* — Lo, how sound he sleeps —

"The subject you presumed was past the power
Of Galen to relieve!" Or else, "How 's this?
Why call for help so tardily? Clouds lour

"Portentously indeed, Sirs! (Naught 's amiss:
He 's at the bed-foot merely.) Still, the storm
May pass averted — not by quacks, I wis,

"Like you, my masters! You, forsooth, perform
A miracle? Stand, sciolists, aside!
Blood, ne'er so cold, at ignorance grows warm!"

Which boasting by result was justified,
Big as might words be: whether drugged or left
Drugless, the patient always lived, not died.

Great the heir's gratitude, so nigh bereft
Of all he prized in this world: sweet the smile
Of disconcerted rivals: "Cure? — say, theft

"From Nature in despite of Art — so style
This off-hand kill-or-cure work! You did much,
I had done more: folk cannot wait awhile!"

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But did the case change? was it — "Scarcely such
The symptoms as to warrant our recourse
To your skill, Doctor! Yet since just a touch

"Of pulse, a taste of breath, has all the force
With you of long investigation claimed
By others, — tracks an ailment to its source

"Intuitively, — may we ask unblamed
What from this pimple you prognosticate?"
"Death!" was the answer, as he saw and named

The coucher by the sick man's head. "Too late
You send for my assistance. I am bold
Only by Nature's leave, and bow to Fate!

"Besides, you have my rivals: lavish gold!
How comfortably quick shall life depart
Cosseted by attentions manifold!

"One day, one hour ago, perchance my art
Had done some service. Since you have yourselves
Chosen — before the horse — to put the cart,

"Why, Sirs, the sooner that the sexton delves
Your patient's grave the better! How you stare
— Shallow, for all the deep books on your shelves!

"Fare you well, fumblers!" Do I need declare
What name and fame, what riches recompensed
The Doctor's practice? Never anywhere

Such an adept as daily evidenced
Each new vaticination! Oh, not he
Like dolts who dallied with their scruples, fenced

With subterfuge, nor gave out frank and free
Something decisive! If he said "I save
The patient," saved he was: if "Death will be

"His portion," you might count him dead. Thus brave,
Behold our worthy, sans competitor
Throughout the country, on the architrave

Of Glory's temple golden-lettered for
Machaon *redivivus!* So, it fell
That, of a sudden, when the Emperor

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Was smit by sore disease, I need not tell
If any other Doctor's aid was sought
To come and forthwith make the sick Prince well.

"He will reward thee as a monarch ought.
Not much imports the malady; but then,
He clings to life and cries like one distraught

"For thee — who, from a simple citizen,
May'st look to rise in rank, — nay, haply wear
A medal with his portrait, — always when

"Recovery is quite accomplished. There!
Pass to the presence!" Hardly has he crossed
The chamber's threshold when he halts, aware

Of who stands sentry by the head. All 's lost.
"Sire, naught avails my art: you near the goal,
And end the race by giving up the ghost."

"How?" cried the monarch: "Names upon your roll
Of half my subjects rescued by your skill —
Old and young, rich and poor — crowd cheek by jowl

"And yet no room for mine? Be saved I will!
Why else am I earth's foremost potentate?
Add me to these and take as fee your fill

"Of gold — that point admits of no debate
Between us: save me, as you can and must, —
Gold, till your gown's pouch cracks beneath the weight!"

This touched the Doctor. "Truly a home-thrust,
Parent, you will not parry! Have I dared
Entreat that you forego the meal of dust

"— Man that is snake's meat — when I saw prepared
Your daily portion? Never! Just this once,
Go from his head, then, — let his life be spared!"

Whisper met whisper in the gruff response:
"Fool, I must have my prey: no inch I budge
From where thou see'st me thus myself ensconce."

"Ah," moaned the sufferer, "by thy look I judge
Wealth fails to tempt thee: what if honors prove
More efficacious? Naught to him I grudge

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"Who saves me. Only keep my head above
The cloud that 's creeping round it — I 'll divide
My empire with thee! No? What 's left but — love!

"Does love allure thee? Well then, take as bride
My only daughter, fair beyond belief!
Save me — to-morrow shall the knot be tied!"

"Father, you hear him! Respite ne'er so brief
Is all I beg: go now and come again
Next day, for aught I care: respect the grief

"Mine will be if thy first-born sues in vain!"
"Fool, I must have my prey!" was all he got
In answer. But a fancy crossed his brain.

"I have it! Sire, methinks a meteor shot
Just now across the heavens and neutralized
Jove's salutary influence: 'neath the blot

"Plumb are you placed now: well that I surmised
The cause of failure! Knaves, reverse the bed!"
"Stay!" groaned the monarch, "I shall be capsized —

"Jolt — jolt — my heels uplift where late my head
Was lying — sure I 'm turned right round at last!
What do you say now, Doctor?" Naught he said,

For why? With one brisk leap the Antic passed
From couch-foot back to pillow, — as before,
Lord of the situation. Long aghast

The Doctor gazed, then "Yet one trial more
Is left me" inwardly he uttered. "Shame
Upon thy flinty heart! Do I implore

"This trifling favor in the idle name
Of mercy to the moribund? I plead
The cause of all thou dost affect: my aim

"Befits my author! Why would I succeed?
Simply that by success I may promote
The growth of thy pet virtues — pride and greed.

"But keep thy favors! — curse thee! I devote
Henceforth my service to the other side.
No time to lose: the rattle 's in his throat.

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"So, — not to leave one last resource untried, —
Run to my house with all haste, somebody!
Bring me that knobstick thence, so often plied

"With profit by the astrologer — shall I
Disdain its help, the mystic Jacob's-Staff?
Sire, do but have the courage not to die

"Till this arrive! Let none of you dare laugh!
Though rugged its exterior, I have seen
That implement work wonders, send the chaff

"Quick and thick flying from the wheat — I mean,
By metaphor, a human sheaf it threshed
Flail-like. Go fetch it! Or — a word between

"Just you and me, friend! — go bid, unabashed,
My mother, whom you 'll find there, bring the stick
Herself — herself, mind!" Out the lackey dashed

Zealous upon the errand. Craft and trick
Are meat and drink to Satan: and he grinned
— How else? — at an excuse so politic

For failure: scarce would Jacob's-Staff rescind
Fate's firm decree! And ever as he neared
The agonizing one, his breath like wind

Froze to the marrow, while his eyeflash seared
Sense in the brain up: closelier and more close
Pressing his prey, when at the door appeared

— Who but his Wife the Bad? Whereof one dose,
One grain, one mite of the medicament,
Sufficed him. Up he sprang. One word, too gross

To soil my lips with, — and through ceiling went
Somehow the Husband. "That a storm 's dispersed
We know for certain by the sulphury scent!

"Hail to the Doctor! Who but one so versed
In all Dame Nature's secrets had prescribed
The staff thus opportunely? Style him first

"And foremost of physicians!" "I 've imbibed
Elixir surely," smiled the prince, — "have gained
New lease of life. Dear Doctor, how you bribed

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"Death to forego me, boots not: you 've obtained
My daughter and her dowry. Death, I 've heard,
Was still on earth the strongest power that reigned,

"Except a Bad Wife!" Whereunto demurred
Nowise the Doctor, so refused the fee
— No dowry, no bad wife!

"You think absurd
This tale?" — the Rabbi added: "True, our Talmud
Boasts sundry such: yet — have our elders erred
In thinking there 's some water there, not all mud?"
I tell it, as the Rabbi told it me.

PAN AND LUNA.

Si credere dignum est. — *Georgic.* III. 390.

O WORTHY of belief I hold it was,
Virgil, your legend in those strange three lines!
No question, that adventure came to pass
One black night in Arcadia: yes, the pines,
Mountains and valleys mingling made one mass
Of black with void black heaven: the earth's confines,
The sky's embrace, — below, above, around,
All hardened into black without a bound.

Fill up a swart stone chalice to the brim
With fresh-squeezed yet fast-thickening poppy-juice:
See how the sluggish jelly, late a-swim,
Turns marble to the touch of who would loose
The solid smooth, grown jet from rim to rim,
By turning round the bowl! So night can fuse
Earth with her all-comprising sky. No less,
Light, the least spark, shows air and emptiness.

And thus it proved when — diving into space,
Stript of all vapor, from each web of mist
Utterly film-free — entered on her race
The naked Moon, full-orbed antagonist
Of night and dark, night's dowry: peak to base,
Upstarted mountains, and each valley, kissed
To sudden life, lay silver-bright: in air
Flew she revealed, Maid-Moon with limbs all bare.

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Still as she fled, each depth — where refuge seemed —
Opening a lone pale chamber, left distinct
Those limbs: 'mid still-retreating blue, she teemed
Herself with whiteness, — virginal, uncinct
By any halo save what finely gleamed
To outline not disguise her: heaven was linked
In one accord with earth to quaff the joy,
Drain beauty to the dregs without alloy.

Whereof she grew aware. What help? When, lo,
A succorable cloud with sleep lay dense:
Some pinetree-top had caught it sailing slow,
And tethered for a prize: in evidence
Captive lay fleece on fleece of piled-up snow
Drowsily patient: flake-heaped how or whence,
The structure of that succorable cloud,
What matter? Shamed she plunged into its shroud.

Orbed — so the woman-figure poets call
Because of rounds on rounds — that apple-shaped
Head which its hair binds close into a ball
Each side the curving ears — that pure undraped
Pout of the sister paps — that . . . Once for all,
Say — her consummate circle thus escaped
With its innumerous circlets, sank absorbed,
Safe in the cloud — O naked Moon full-orbed!

But what means this? The downy swathes combine,
Conglobe, the smothery coy-caressing stuff
Curdles about her! Vain each twist and twine
Those lithe limbs try, encroached on by a fluff
Fitting as close as fits the dented spine
Its flexile ivory outside-flesh: enough!
The plumy drifts contract, condense, constringe,
Till she is swallowed by the feathery springe.

As when a pearl slips lost in the thin foam
Churned on a sea-shore, and, o'er-frothed, conceits
Herself safe-housed in Amphitrite's dome, —
If, through the bladdery wave-worked yeast, she meets
What most she loathes and leaps from, — elf from gnome
No gladlier, — finds that safest of retreats
Bubble about a treacherous hand wide ope
To grasp her — (divers who pick pearls so grope) —

So lay this Maid-Moon clasped around and caught
By rough red Pan, the god of all that tract:

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He it was schemed the snare thus subtly wrought
With simulated earth-breath, — wool-tufts packed
Into a billowy wrappage. Sheep far-sought
For spotless shearings yield such: take the fact
As learned Virgil gives it, — how the breed
Whitens itself forever: yes, indeed!

If one forefather ram, though pure as chalk
From tinge on fleece, should still display a tongue
Black 'neath the beast's moist palate, prompt men balk
The propagating plague: he gets no young:
They rather slay him, — sell his hide to calk
Ships with, first steeped in pitch, — nor hands are wrung
In sorrow for his fate: protected thus,
The purity we love is gained for us.

So did Girl-Moon, by just her attribute
Of unmatched modesty betrayed, lie trapped,
Bruised to the breast of Pan, half god half brute,
Raked by his bristly boar-sward while he lapped
— Never say, kissed her! that were to pollute
Love's language — which moreover proves unapt
To tell how she recoiled — as who finds thorns
Where she sought flowers — when, feeling, she touched — horns!

Then — does the legend say? — first moon-eclipse
Happened, first swooning-fit which puzzled sore
The early sages? Is that why she dips
Into the dark, a minute and no more,
Only so long as serves her while she rips
The cloud's womb through and, faultless as before,
Pursues her way? No lesson for a maid
Left she, a maid herself thus trapped, betrayed?

Ha, Virgil? Tell the rest, you! "To the deep
Of his domain the wildwood, Pan forthwith
Called her, and so she followed" — in her sleep,
Surely? — "by no means spurning him." The myth
Explain who may! Let all else go, I keep
— As of a ruin just a monolith —
Thus much, one verse of five words, each a boon:
Arcadia, night, a cloud, Pan, and the moon.

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"Touch him ne'er so lightly, into song he broke :
Soil so quick-receptive, — not one feather-seed,
Not one flower-dust fell but straight its fall awoke
Vitalizing virtue : song would song succeed
Sudden as spontaneous — prove a poet-soul ! "
Indeed ?
Rock 's the song-soil rather, surface hard and bare :
Sun and dew their mildness, storm and frost their rage
Vainly both expend, — few flowers awaken there :
Quiet in its cleft broods — what the after-age
Knows and names a pine, a nation's heritage.

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JOCOSERIA

[1883]

WANTING IS — WHAT?

WANTING is — what?
Summer redundant,
Blueness abundant,
— Where is the blot?
Beamy the world, yet a blank all the same,
— Framework which waits for a picture to frame:
What of the leafage, what of the flower?
Roses embowering with naught they embower!
Come then, complete incompletion, O comer,
Pant through the blueness, perfect the summer!
Breathe but one breath
Rose-beauty above,
And all that was death
Grows life, grows love,
Grows love!

DONALD.

"WILL you hear my story also,
— Huge Sport, brave adventure in plenty?"
The boys were a band from Oxford,
The oldest of whom was twenty.

The bothy we held carouse in
Was bright with fire and candle;
Tale followed tale like a merry-go-round
Whereof Sport turned the handle.

In our eyes and noses — turf-smoke:
In our ears a tune from the trivet,
Whence "Boiling, boiling," the kettle sang,
"And ready for fresh Glenlivet."

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So, feat capped feat, with a vengeance:
Truths, though, — the lads were loyal:
"Grouse, five-score brace to the bag!
Deer, ten hours' stalk of the Royal!"

Of boasting, not one bit, boys!
Only there seemed to settle
Somehow above your curly heads,
— Plain through the singing kettle,

Palpable through the cloud,
As each new-puffed Havana
Rewarded the teller's well-told tale, —
This vaunt "To Sport — Hosanna!

"Hunt, fish, shoot,
Would a man fulfil life's duty!
Not to the bodily frame alone
Does Sport give strength and beauty,

"But character gains in — courage?
Ay, Sir, and much beside it!
You don't sport, more 's the pity:
You soon would find, if you tried it,

"Good sportsman means good fellow,
Sound-hearted he, to the centre;
Your mealy-mouthed mild milksops
— There 's where the rot can enter!

"There 's where the dirt will breed,
The shabbiness Sport would banish!
Oh no, Sir, no! In your honored case
All such objections vanish.

"'T is known how hard you studied:
A Double-First — what, the jigger!
Give me but half your Latin and Greek,
I 'll never again touch trigger!

"Still, tastes are tastes, allow me!
Allow, too, where there 's keenness
For Sport, there 's little likelihood
Of a man's displaying meanness!"

So, put on my mettle, I interposed.
"Will you hear my story?" quoth I.

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"Never mind how long since it happed,
I sat, as we sit, in a bothy;

"With as merry a band of mates, too,
Undergrads all on a level:
(One 's a Bishop, one 's gone to the Bench,
And one 's gone — well, to the Devil.)

"When, lo, a scratching and tapping!
In hobbled a ghastly visitor.
Listen to just what he told us himself
— No need of our playing inquisitor!"

Do you happen to know in Ross-shire
Mount Ben . . . but the name scarce matters:
Of the naked fact I am sure enough,
Though I clothe it in rags and tatters.

You may recognize Ben by description;
Behind him — a moor's immenseness:
Up goes the middle mount of a range,
Fringed with its firs in denseness.

Rimming the edge, its fir-fringe, mind!
For an edge there is, though narrow;
From end to end of the range, a stripe
Of path runs straight as an arrow.

And the mountaineer who takes that path
Saves himself miles of journey
He has to plod if he crosses the moor
Through heather, peat, and burnie.

But a mountaineer he needs must be,
For, look you, right in the middle
Projects bluff Ben — with an end in *ich* —
Why planted there, is a riddle:

Since all Ben's brothers little and big
Keep rank, set shoulder to shoulder,
And only this burliest out must bulge
Till it seems — to the beholder

From down in the gully, — as if Ben's breast,
To a sudden spike diminished,

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Would signify to the boldest foot
"All further passage finished!"

Yet the mountaineer who sidles on
And on to the very bending,
Discovers, if heart and brain be proof,
No necessary ending.

Foot up, foot down, to the turn abrupt
Having trod, he, there arriving,
Finds — what he took for a point was breadth,
A mercy of Nature's contriving.

So, he rounds what, when 't is reached, proves straight,
From one side gains the other:
The wee path widens — resume the march,
And he foils you, Ben my brother!

But Donald — (that name, I hope, will do) —
I wrong him if I call "foiling"
The tramp of the callant, whistling the while
As blithe as our kettle 's boiling.

He had dared the danger from boyhood up,
And now, — when perchance was waiting
A lass at the brig below, — 'twixt mount
And moor would he stand debating?

Moreover this Donald was twenty-five,
A glory of bone and muscle:
Did a fiend dispute the right of way,
Donald would try a tussle.

Lightsomely marched he out of the broad
On to the narrow and narrow;
A step more, rounding the angular rock,
Reached the front straight as an arrow.

He stepped it, safe on the ledge he stood,
When — whom found he full-facing?
What fellow in courage and wariness too,
Had scouted ignoble pacing,

And left low safety to timid mates,
And made for the dread dear danger,
And gained the height where — who could guess
He would meet with a rival ranger?

Google

'T was a gold-red stag that stood and stared,
Gigantic and magnific,
By the wonder — ay, and the peril — struck
Intelligent and pacific :

For a red deer is no fallow deer
Grown cowardly through park-feeding ;
He batters you like a thunderbolt
If you brave his haunts unheeding.

I doubt he could hardly perform *volte-face*
Had valor advised discretion :
You may walk on a rope, but to turn on a rope
No Blondin makes profession.

Yet Donald must turn, would pride permit,
Though pride ill brooks retiring :
Each eyed each — mute man, motionless beast —
Less fearing than admiring.

These are the moments when quite new sense,
To meet some need as novel,
Springs up in the brain : it inspired resource :
— " Nor advance nor retreat but — grovel ! "

And slowly, surely, never a whit
Relaxing the steady tension
Of eye-stare which binds man to beast, —
By an inch and inch declension,

Sank Donald sidewise down and down :
Till flat, breast upwards, lying
At his six-foot length, no corpse more still,
— " If he cross me ! The trick 's worth trying."

Minutes were an eternity ;
But a new sense was created
In the stag's brain too ; he resolves ! Slow, sure,
With eye-stare unabated,

Feelingly he extends a foot
Which tastes the way ere it touches
Earth's solid and just escapes man's soft,
Nor hold of the same unclutches

Till its fellow foot, light as a feather whisk,
Lands itself no less finely :

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So a mother removes a fly from the face
Of her babe asleep supinely.

And now 't is the haunch and hind-foot's turn
— That 's hard: can the beast quite raise it?
Yes, traversing half the prostrate length,
His hoof-tip does not graze it.

Just one more lift! But Donald, you see,
Was sportsman first, man after:
A fancy lightened his caution through,
— He wellnigh broke into laughter:

"It were nothing short of a miracle!
Unrivalled, unexampled —
All sporting feats with this feat matched
Were down and dead and trampled!"

The last of the legs as tenderly
Follows the rest: or never
Or now is the time! His knife in reach,
And his right-hand loose — how clever!

For this can stab up the stomach's soft,
While the left-hand grasps the pastern.
A rise on the elbow, and — now 's the time
Or never: this turn 's the last turn!

I shall dare to place myself by God
Who scanned — for He does — each feature
Of the face thrown up in appeal to Him
By the agonizing creature.

Nay, I hear plain words: "Thy gift brings this!"
Up he sprang, back he staggered,
Over he fell, and with him our friend
— At following game no laggard.

Yet he was not dead when they picked next day
From the gully's depth the wreck of him;
His fall had been stayed by the stag beneath
Who cushioned and saved the neck of him.

But the rest of his body — why, doctors said,
Whatever could break was broken;
Legs, arms, ribs, all of him looked like a toast
In a tumbler of port-wine soaken.

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"That your life is left you, thank the stag!"
Said they when — the slow cure ended —
They opened the hospital-door, and thence
— Strapped, spliced, main fractures mended,

And minor damage left wisely alone, —
Like an old shoe clouted and cobbled,
Out — what went in a Goliath wellnigh, —
Some half of a David hobbled.

"You must ask an alms from house to house:
Sell the stag's head for a bracket,
With its grand twelve tines — I 'd buy it myself —
And use the skin for a jacket!"

He was wiser, made both head and hide
His win-penny: hands and knees on,
Would manage to crawl — poor crab — by the roads
In the misty stalking-season.

And if he discovered a bothy like this,
Why, harvest was sure: folk listened.
He told his tale to the lovers of Sport:
Lips twitched, cheeks glowed, eyes glistened.

And when he had come to the close, and spread
His spoils for the gazers' wonder,
With "Gentlemen, here 's the skull of the stag
I was over, thank God, not under!" —

The company broke out in applause;
"By Jingo, a lucky cripple!
Have a munch of grouse and a hunk of bread,
And a tug, besides, at our tipple!"

And "There 's my pay for your pluck!" cried This,
"And mine for your jolly story!"
Cried That, while T' other — but he was drunk —
Hiccupped "A trump, a Tory!"

I hope I gave twice as much as the rest;
For, as Homer would say, "within grate
Though teeth kept tongue," my whole soul growled,
"Rightly rewarded, — Ingrate!"

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SOLOMON AND BALKIS.

Solomon King of the Jews and the Queen of Sheba, Balkis,
Talk on the ivory throne, and we well may conjecture their talk is
Solely of things sublime: why else has she sought Mount Zion,
Climbed the six golden steps, and sat betwixt lion and lion?

She proves him with hard questions: before she has reached the middle
He smiling supplies the end, straight solves them riddle by riddle;
Until, dead-beaten at last, there is left no spirit in her,
And thus would she close the game whereof she was first beginner:

"O wisest thou of the wise, world's marvel and wellnigh monster,
One crabbed question more to construe or *vulgo* conster!
Who are those, of all mankind, a monarch of perfect wisdom
Should open to, when they knock at *spheteron do* — that 's, his dome?"

The King makes tart reply: "Whom else but the wise his equals
Should he welcome with heart and voice? — since, king though he be, such weak walls
Of circumstance — power and pomp — divide souls each from other
That whoso proves kingly in craft I needs must acknowledge my brother.

"Come poet, come painter, come sculptor, come builder — whate'er his condition,
Is he prime in his art? We are peers! My insight has pierced the partition
And hails — for the poem, the picture, the statue, the building — my fellow!
Gold 's gold though dim in the dust: court-polish soon turns it yellow.

"But tell me in turn, O thou to thy weakling sex superior,
That for knowledge hast travelled so far yet seemest no whit the wearier, —
Who are those, of all mankind, a queen like thyself, consummate
In wisdom, should call to her side with an affable 'Up hither, come, mate'?"

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"The Good are my mates — how else? Why doubt it?" the Queen upbridled:
"Sure even above the Wise, — or in travel my eyes have idled, —
I see the Good stand plain: be they rich, poor, shrewd, or simple,
If Good they only are. . . . Permit me to drop my wimple!"

And, in that bashful jerk of her body, she — peace, thou scoffer! —
Jostled the King's right-hand stretched courteously help to proffer,
And so disclosed a portent: all unaware the Prince eyed
The Ring which bore the Name — turned outside now from inside!

The truth-compelling Name! — and at once, "I greet the Wise — oh,
Certainly welcome such to my court — with this proviso:
The building must be my temple, my person stand forth the statue,
The picture my portrait prove, and the poem my praise — you cat, you!"

But Solomon nonplussed? Nay! "Be truthful in turn!" so bade he:
"See the Name, obey its hest!" And at once subjoins the lady,
— "Provided the Good are the young, men strong and tall and proper,
Such servants I straightway enlist, — which means" . . . But the blushes stop her.

"Ah, Soul," the Monarch sighed, "that would'st soar yet ever crawlest,
How comes it thou canst discern the greatest yet choose the smallest,
Unless because heaven is far, where wings find fit expansion,
While creeping on all-fours suits, suffices the earthly mansion?

"Aspire to the Best! But which? There are Bests and Bests so many,
With a *habitat* each for each, earth's Best as much Best as any!
On Lebanon roots the cedar — soil lofty, yet stony and sandy —
While hyssop, of worth in its way, on the wall grows low but handy.

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"Above may the Soul spread wing, spurn body and sense beneath her;
Below she must condescend to plodding unbuoyed by ether.
In heaven I yearn for knowledge, account all else inanity;
On earth I confess an itch for the praise of fools — that 's Vanity.

"It is naught, it will go, it can never presume above to trouble me;
But here, — why, it toys and tickles and teases, howe'er I redouble me
In a doggedest of endeavors to play the indifferent. Therefore,
Suppose we resume discourse? Thou hast travelled thus far: but wherefore?

"Solely for Solomon's sake, to see whom earth styles Sagest?"
Through her blushes laughed the Queen. "For the sake of a Sage? The gay jest!
On high, be communion with Mind — there, Body concerns not Balkis:
Down here, — do I make too bold? Sage Solomon, — one fool's small kiss!"

CRISTINA AND MONALDESCHI.

Ah, but how each loved each, Marquis!
Here 's the gallery they trod
Both together, he her god,
She his idol, — lend your rod,
Chamberlain! — ay, there they are — "*Quis Separabit?*" — plain those two
Touching words come into view,
Apposite for me and you:

Since they witness to incessant
Love like ours: King Francis, he —
Diane the adored one, she —
Prototypes of you and me.
Everywhere is carved her Crescent
With his Salamander-sign —
Flame-fed creature: flame benign
To itself or, if malign,

Only to the meddling curious,
— So, be warned, Sir! Where 's my head?

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How it wanders! What I said
Merely meant — the creature, fed
Thus on flame, was scarce injurious
Save to fools who woke its ire,
Thinking fit to play with fire.
'T is the Crescent you admire?

Then, be Diane! I 'll be Francis.
Crescents change, — true! — wax and wane,
Woman-like: male hearts retain
Heat nor, once warm, cool again.
So, we figure — such our chance is —
I as man and you as . . . What?
Take offence? My Love forgot
He plays woman, I do not?

I — the woman? See my habit,
Ask my people! Anyhow,
Be we what we may, one vow
Binds us, male or female. Now, —
Stand, Sir! Read! "*Quis separabit?*"
Half a mile of pictured way
Past these palace-walls to-day
Traversed, this I came to say.

You must needs begin to love me;
First I hated, then, at best,
— Have it so! — I acquiesced;
Pure compassion did the rest.
From below thus raised above me,
Would you, step by step, descend,
Pity me, become my friend,
Like me, like less, loathe at end?

That 's the ladder's round you rose by!
That — my own foot kicked away,
Having raised you: let it stay,
Serve you for retreating? Nay.
Close to me you climbed: as close by,
Keep your station, though the peak
Reached proves somewhat bare and bleak!
Woman 's strong if man is weak.

Keep here, loving me forever!
Love's look, gesture, speech, I claim:
Act love, lie love, all the same —

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Play as earnest were our game!
Lonely I stood long: 't was clever
When you climbed, before men's eyes,
Spurned the earth and scaled the skies,
Gained my peak and grasped your prize.

Here you stood, then, to men's wonder;
Here you tire of standing? Kneel!
Cure what giddiness you feel,
This way! Do your senses reel?
Not unlikely! What rolls under?
Yawning death in yon abyss
Where the waters whirl and hiss
Round more frightful peaks than this.

Should my buffet dash you thither . . .
But be sage! No watery grave
Needs await you: seeming brave
Kneel on safe, dear timid slave!
You surmised, when you climbed hither,
Just as easy were retreat
Should you tire, conceive unmeet
Longer patience at my feet?

Me as standing, you as stooping, —
Who arranged for each the pose?
Lest men think us friends turned foes,
Keep the attitude you chose!
Men are used to this same grouping —
I and you like statues seen.
You and I, no third between,
Kneel and stand! That makes the scene.

Mar it — and one buffet . . . Pardon!
Needless warmth — wise words in waste!
'T was prostration that replaced
Kneeling, then? A proof of taste.
Crouch, not kneel, while I mount guard on
Prostrate love — become no waif,
No estray to waves that chafe
Disappointed — love so safe!

Waves that chafe? The idlest fancy!
Peaks that scare? I think we know
Walls enclose our sculpture: so
Grouped, we pose in Fontainebleau.

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Up now! Wherefore hesitancy?
Arm in arm and cheek by cheek,
Laugh with me at waves and peak!
Silent still? Why, pictures speak.

See, where Juno strikes Ixion,
Primatice speaks plainly! Pooh —
Rather, Florentine Le Roux!
I've lost head for who is who —
So it swims and wanders! Fie on
What still proves me female! Here,
By the staircase! — for we near
That dark "Gallery of the Deer."

Look me in the eyes once! Steady!
Are you faithful now as erst
On that eve when we two first
Vowed at Avon, blessed and cursed
Faith and falsehood? Pale already?
Forward! Must my hand compel
Entrance — this way? Exit — well,
Somehow, somewhere. Who can tell?

What if to the selfsame place in
Rustic Avon, at the door
Of the village church once more,
Where a tombstone paves the floor
By that holy-water basin
You appealed to — "As, below,
This stone hides its corpse, e'en so
I your secrets hide"? What ho!

Friends, my four! You, Priest, confess him!
I have judged the culprit there:
Execute my sentence! Care
For no mail such cowards wear!
Done, Priest? Then, absolve and bless him!
Now — you three, stab thick and fast,
Deep and deeper! Dead at last?
Thanks, friends — Father, thanks! Aghast?

What one word of his confession
Would you tell me, though I lured
With that royal crown abjured
Just because its bars immured

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Love too much? Love burst compression,
Fled free, finally confessed
All its secrets to that breast
Whence . . . let Avon tell the rest!

MARY WOLLSTONECRAFT AND FUSELI

Oh, but is it not hard, Dear?
Mine are the nerves to quake at a mouse:
If a spider drops I shrink with fear:
I should die outright in a haunted house;
While for you — did the danger dared bring help —
From a lion's den I could steal his whelp,
With a serpent round me, stand stock-still,
Go sleep in a churchyard, — so would will
Give me the power to dare and do
Valiantly — just for you!

Much amiss in the head, Dear,
I toil at a language, tax my brain
Attempting to draw — the scratches here!
I play, play, practise, and all in vain:
But for you — if my triumph brought you pride,
I would grapple with Greek Plays till I died,
Paint a portrait of you — who can tell?
Work my fingers off for your "Pretty well:"
Language and painting and music too,
Easily done — for you!

Strong and fierce in the heart, Dear,
With — more than a will — what seems a power
To pounce on my prey, love outbroke here
In flame devouring and to devour.
Such love has labored its best and worst
To win me a lover; yet, last as first,
I have not quickened his pulse one beat,
Fixed a moment's fancy, bitter or sweet:
Yet the strong fierce heart's love 's labor's due,
Utterly lost, was — you!

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ADAM, LILITH, AND EVE.

One day, it thundered and lightened.
Two women, fairly frightened,
Sank to their knees, transformed, transfixed,
At the feet of the man who sat betwixt;
And "Mercy!" cried each — "if I tell the truth
Of a passage in my youth!"

Said This: "Do you mind the morning
I met your love with scorning?
As the worst of the venom left my lips,
I thought, 'If, despite this lie, he strips
The mask from my soul with a kiss — I crawl
His slave, — soul, body, and all!'"

Said That: "We stood to be married;
The priest, or someone, tarried;
'If Paradise-door prove locked?' smiled you.
I thought, as I nodded, smiling too,
'Did one, that 's away, arrive — nor late
Nor soon should unlock Hell's gate!'"

It ceased to lighten and thunder.
Up started both in wonder,
Looked round and saw that the sky was clear,
Then laughed "Confess you believed us, Dear!"
"I saw through the joke!" the man replied.
They re-seated themselves beside.

IXION.

High in the dome, suspended, of Hell, sad triumph, behold us!
Here the revenge of a God, there the amends of a Man.
Whirling forever in torment, flesh once mortal, immortal
Made — for a purpose of hate — able to die and revive,
Pays to the uttermost pang, then, newly for payment replenished,
Doles out — old yet young — agonies ever afresh;
Whence the result above me: torment is bridged by a rainbow, —
Tears, sweat, blood, — each spasm, ghastly once, glorified now.
Wrung, by the rush of the wheel ordained my place of reposing,
Off in a sparklike spray, — flesh become vapor through pain, —
Flies the bestowment of Zeus, soul's vaunted bodily vesture,
Made that his feats observed gain the approval of Man, —

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Flesh that he fashioned with sense of the earth and the sky and the ocean,
Framed should pierce to the star, fitted to pore on the plant, —
All, for a purpose of hate, re-framed, re-fashioned, refitted,
Till, consummate at length, — lo, the employment of sense!
Pain's mere minister now to the soul, once pledged to her pleasure —
Soul, if untrammelled by flesh, unapprehensive of pain!
Body, professed soul's slave, which serving beguiled and betrayed her,
Made things false seem true, cheated through eye and through ear,
Lured thus heart and brain to believe in the lying reported, —
Spurn but the trait'rous slave, uttermost atom, away,
What should obstruct soul's rush on the real, the only apparent?
Say I have erred, — how else? Was I Ixion or Zeus?
Foiled by my senses I dreamed; I doubtless awaken in wonder:
This proves shine, that — shade? Good was the evil that seemed?
Shall I, with sight thus gained, by torture be taught I was blind once?
Sisuphos, teaches thy stone — Tantalos, teaches thy thirst
Aught which unaided sense, purged pure, less plainly demonstrates?
No, for the past was dream: now that the dreamers awake,
Sisuphos scouts low fraud, and to Tantalos treason is folly.
Ask of myself, whose form melts on the murderous wheel,
What is the sin which throe and throe prove sin to the sinner!
Say the false charge was true, — thus do I expiate, say,
Arrogant thought, word, deed, — mere man who conceited me godlike,
Sat beside Zeus, my friend — knelt before Heré, my love!
What were the need but of pitying power to touch and disperse it,
Film-work — eye's and ear's — all the distraction of sense?
How should the soul not see, not hear, — perceive and as plainly
Render, in thought, word, deed, back again truth — not a lie?
"Ay, but the pain is to punish thee!" Zeus, once more for a pastime,
Play the familiar, the frank! Speak and have speech in return!
I was of Thessaly king, there ruled and a people obeyed me:
Mine to establish the law, theirs to obey it or die:
Wherefore? Because of the good to the people, because of the honor

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Thence accruing to me, king, the king's law was supreme.
What of the weakling, the ignorant criminal? Not who, excuseless,
Breaking my law braved death, knowing his deed and its due —
Nay, but the feeble and foolish, the poor transgressor, of purpose
No whit more than a tree, born to erectness of bole,
Palm or plane or pine, we laud if lofty, columnar —
Loathe if athwart, askew, — leave to the axe and the flame!
Where is the vision may penetrate earth and beholding acknowledge
Just one pebble at root ruined the straightness of stem?
Whose fine vigilance follows the sapling, accounts for the failure,
— Here blew wind, so it bent: there the snow lodged, so it broke?
Also the tooth of the beast, bird's bill, mere bite of the insect
Gnawed, gnarled, warped their worst: passive it lay to offence.
King — I was man, no more: what I recognized faulty I punished,
Laying it prone: be sure, more than a man had I proved,
Watch and ward o'er the sapling at birthtime had saved it, nor simply
Owned the distortion's excuse, — hindered it wholly: nay, more —
Even a man, as I sat in my place to do judgment, and pallid
Criminals passing to doom shuddered away at my foot,
Could I have probed through the face to the heart, read plain a repentance,
Crime confessed fools' play, virtue ascribed to the wise,
Had I not stayed the consignment to doom, not dealt the renewed ones
Life to retraverse the past, light to retrieve the misdeed?
Thus had I done, and thus to have done much more it behoves thee,
Zeus who madest man — flawless or faulty, thy work!
What if the charge were true, as thou mouthest, — Ixion the cherished
Minion of Zeus grew vain, vied with the godships and fell,
Forfeit through arrogance? Stranger! I clothed, with the grace of our human,
Inhumanity — gods, natures I likened to ours.
Man among men I had borne me till gods forsooth must regard me
— Nay, must approve, applaud, claim as a comrade at last.
Summoned to enter their circle, I sat — their equal, how other?

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Love should be absolute love, faith is in fulness or naught.
"I am thy friend, be mine!" smiled Zeus: "If Heré attract thee,"
Blushed the imperial cheek, "then — as thy heart may suggest!"
Faith in me sprang to the faith, my love hailed love as its fellow,
"Zeus, we are friends — how fast! Heré, my heart for thy heart!"
Then broke smile into fury of frown, and the thunder of "Hence, fool!"
Then through the kiss laughed scorn "Limbs or a cloud was to clasp?"
Then from Olumpos to Erebos, then from the rapture to torment,
Then from the fellow of gods — misery's mate, to the man!
— Man henceforth and forever, who lent from the glow of his nature
Warmth to the cold, with light colored the black and the blank.
So did a man conceive of your passion, you passion-protesters!
So did he trust, so love — being the truth of your lie!
You to aspire to be Man! Man made you who vainly would ape him:
You are the hollowness, he — filling you, falsifies void.
Even as — witness the emblem, Hell's sad triumph suspended,
Born of my tears, sweat, blood — bursting to vapor above —
Arching my torment, an iris ghostlike startles the darkness,
Cold white — jewelry quenched — justifies, glorifies pain.
Strive, my kind, though strife endure through endless obstruction,
Stage after stage, each rise marred by as certain a fall!
Baffled forever — yet never so baffled but, e'en in the baffling,
When Man's strength proves weak, checked in the body or soul,
Whatsoever the medium, flesh or essence, — Ixion 's
Made for a purpose of hate, — clothing the entity Thou,
— Medium whence that entity strives for the Not-Thou beyond it,
Fire elemental, free, frame unencumbered, the All, —
Never so baffled but — when, on the verge of an alien existence,
Heartened to press, by pangs burst to the infinite Pure,
Nothing is reached but the ancient weakness still that arrests strength,
Circumambient still, still the poor human array,
Pride and revenge and hate and cruelty — all it has burst through,
Thought to escape, — fresh formed, found in the fashion it fled.

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Never so baffled but — when Man pays the price of endeavor,
Thunderstruck, downthrust, Tartaros-doomed to the wheel, —
Then, ay, then, from the tears and sweat and blood of his torment,
E'en from the triumph of Hell, up let him look and rejoice!
What is the influence, high o'er Hell, that turns to a rapture
Pain — and despair's murk mists blends in a rainbow of hope?
What is beyond the obstruction, stage by stage though it baffle?
Back must I fall, confess "Ever the weakness I fled"?
No, for beyond, far, far is a Purity all-unobstructed!
Zeus was Zeus — not Man: wrecked by his weakness, I whirl.
Out of the wreck I rise — past Zeus to the Potency o'er him!
I — to have hailed him my friend! I — to have clasped her — my love!
Pallid birth of my pain, — where light, where light is, aspiring
Thither I rise, whilst thou — Zeus, keep the godship and sink!

JOCHANAN HAKKADOSH.

"THIS now, this other story makes amends
And justifies our Mishna," quoth the Jew
Aforesaid. "Tell it, learnedest of friends!"

A certain morn broke beautiful and blue
O'er Schiphaz city, bringing joy and mirth,
— So had ye deemed; while the reverse was true,

Since one small house there gave a sorrow birth
In such black sort that, to each faithful eye,
Midnight, not morning settled on the earth.

How else, when it grew certain thou wouldst die,
Our much-enlightened master, Israel's prop,
Eximious Jochanan Ben Sabbathai?

Old, yea, but, undiminished of a drop,
The vital essence pulsed through heart and brain;
Time left unsickled yet the plenteous crop

On poll and chin and cheek, whereof a skein
Handmaids might weave — hairs silk-soft, silver-white,
Such as the wool-plant's; none the less in vain

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Had Physic striven her best against the spite
Of fell disease: the Rabbi must succumb;
And, round the couch whereon in piteous plight

He lay a-dying, scholars, — awe-struck, dumb
Throughout the night-watch, — roused themselves and spoke
One to the other: "Ere death's touch benumb

"His active sense, — while yet 'neath Reason's yoke
Obedient toils his tongue, — befits we claim
The fruit of long experience, bid this oak

"Shed us an acorn which may, all the same,
Grow to a temple-pillar, — dear that day! —
When Israel's scattered seed finds place and name

"Among the envious nations. Lamp us, pray,
Thou the Enlightener! Partest hence in peace?
Hailest without regret — much less, dismay —

"The hour of thine approximate release
From fleshly bondage soul hath found obstruct?
Calmly envisagest the sure increase

"Of knowledge? Eden's tree must hold unplucked
Some apple, sure, has never tried thy tooth,
Juicy with sapience thou hast sought, not sucked?

"Say, does age acquiesce in vanished youth?
Still towers thy purity above — as erst —
Our pleasant follies? Be thy last word — truth!"

The Rabbi groaned; then, grimly, "Last as first
The truth speak I — in boyhood who began
Striving to live an angel, and, amerced

"For such presumption, die now hardly man.
What have I proved of life? To live, indeed,
That much I learned: but here lies Jochanan

"More luckless than stood David when, to speed
His fighting with the Philistine, they brought
Saul's harness forth: whereat, 'Alack, I need

"'Armor to arm me, but have never fought
With sword and spear, nor tried to manage shield,
Proving arms' use, as well-trained warrior ought.

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"'Only a sling and pebbles can I wield!'
So he: while I, contrariwise, 'No trick
Of weapon helpful on the battlefield

"'Comes unfamiliar to my theoric:
But, bid me put in practice what I know,
Give me a sword — it stings like Moses' stick,

"'A serpent I let drop apace.' E'en so,
I, — able to comport me at each stage
Of human life as never here below

"Man played his part, — since mine the heritage
Of wisdom carried to that perfect pitch,
Ye rightly praise, — I, therefore, who, thus sage,

"Could sure act man triumphantly, enrich
Life's annals with example how I played
Lover, Bard, Soldier, Statist, — (all of which

"Parts in presentment failing, cries invade
The world's ear — 'Ah, the Past, the pearl-gift thrown
To hogs, time's opportunity we made

"'So light of, only recognized when flown!
Had we been wise!') — in fine, I — wise enough, —
What profit brings me wisdom never shown

"Just when its showing would from each rebuff
Shelter weak virtue, threaten back to bounds
Encroaching vice, tread smooth each track too rough

"For youth's unsteady footstep, climb the rounds
Of life's long ladder, one by slippery one,
Yet make no stumble? Me hard fate confounds

"With that same crowd of wailers I outrun
By promising to teach another cry
Of more hilarious mood than theirs, the sun

"I look my last at is insulted by.
What cry, — ye ask? Give ear on every side!
Witness yon Lover! 'How entrapped am I!

"'Methought, because a virgin's rose-lip vied
With ripe Khubbezleh's, needs must beauty mate
With meekness and discretion in a bride:

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" 'Bride she became to me who wail — too late —
Unwise I loved!' That 's one cry. 'Mind 's my gift:
I might have loaded me with lore, full weight

" 'Pressed down and running over at each rift
O' the brain-bag where the famished clung and fed.
I filled it with what rubbish! — would not sift

" 'The wheat from chaff, sound grain from musty — shed
Poison abroad as oft as nutriment —
And sighing say but as my fellows said,

" '*Unwise I learned!*' That 's two. 'In dwarf's-play spent
Was giant's prowess: warrior all unversed
In war's right waging, I struck brand, was lent

" 'For steel's fit service, on mere stone — and cursed
Alike the shocked limb and the shivered steel,
Seeing too late the blade's true use which erst

" 'How was I blind to! My cry swells the peal —
Unwise I fought!' That 's three. But wherefore waste
Breath on the wailings longer? Why reveal

" A root of bitterness whereof the taste
Is noisome to Humanity at large?
First we get Power, but Power absurdly placed

" In Folly's keeping, who resigns her charge
To Wisdom when all Power grows nothing worth:
Bones marrowless are mocked with helm and targe

" When, like your Master's, soon below the earth
With worms shall warfare only be. Farewell,
Children! I die a failure since my birth!"

" Not so!" arose a protest as, pell-mell,
They pattered from his chamber to the street,
Bent on a last resource. Our Targums tell

That such resource there is. Put case, there meet
The Nine Points of Perfection — rarest chance —
Within some saintly teacher whom the fleet

Years, in their blind implacable advance,
O'ertake before fit teaching born of these
Have magnified his scholars' countenance,—

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If haply folk compassionating please
To render up — according to his store,
Each one — a portion of the life he sees

Hardly worth saving when 't is set before
Earth's benefit should the Saint, Hakkadosh,
Favored thereby, attain to full fourscore —

If such contribute (Scoffer, spare thy "Bosh!")
A year, a month, a day, an hour — to eke
Life out, — in him away the gift shall wash

That much of ill-spent time recorded, streak
The twilight of the so-assisted sage
With a new sunrise: truth, though strange to speak!

Quick to the doorway, then, where youth and age,
All Israel, thronging, waited for the last
News of the loved one. "'T is the final stage:

"Art's utmost done, the Rabbi's feet tread fast
The way of all flesh!" So announced that apt
Olive-branch Tsaddik: "Yet, O Brethren, cast

"No eye to earthward! Look where heaven has clapped
Morning's extinguisher — yon ray-shot robe
Of sun-threads — on the constellation mapped

"And mentioned by our Elders, — yea, from Job
Down to Satam, — as figuring forth — what?
Perpend a mystery! Ye call it *Dob*,

"'The Bear': I trow, a wiser name than that
Were *Aish* — 'The Bier': a corpse those four stars hold,
Which — are not those Three Daughters weeping at,

"*Banoth?* I judge so: list while I unfold
The reason. As in twice twelve hours this Bier
Goes and returns, about the east-cone rolled,

"So may a setting luminary here
Be rescued from extinction, rolled anew
Upon its track of labor, strong and clear,

"About the Pole — that Salem, every Jew
Helps to build up when thus he saves some Saint
Ordained its architect. Ye grasp the clue

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"To all ye seek? The Rabbi's lamp-flame faint
Sinks: would ye raise it? Lend then life from yours,
Spare each his oil-drop! Do I need acquaint

"The Chosen how self-sacrifice ensures
Tenfold requital? — urge ye emulate
The fame of those Old Just Ones death procures

"Such praise for, that 't is now men's sole debate
Which of the Ten, who volunteered at Rome
To die for glory to our Race, was great

"Beyond his fellows? Was it thou — the comb
Of iron carded, flesh from bone, away,
While thy lips sputtered through their bloody foam

"Without a stoppage (O brave Akiba!)
'Hear, Israel, our Lord God is One'? Or thou,
Jischab? — who smiledst, burning, since there lay,

"Burning along with thee, our Law! I trow,
Such martyrdom might tax flesh to afford:
While that for which I make petition now,

"To what amounts it? Youngster, wilt thou hoard
Each minute of long years thou look'st to spend
In dalliance with thy spouse? Hast thou so soared,

"Singer of songs, all out of sight of friend
And teacher, warbling like a woodland bird,
There 's left no Selah, 'twixt two psalms, to lend

"Our late-so-tuneful quirist? Thou, averred
The fighter born to plant our lion-flag
Once more on Zion's mount, — dotb, all-unheard,

"My pleading fail to move thee? Toss some rag
Shall stanch our wound, some minute never missed
From swordsman's lustihood like thine! Wilt lag

"In liberal bestowment, show close fist
When open palm we look for, — thou, wide-known
For statecraft? whom, 't is said, an if thou list,

"The Shah himself would seat beside his throne,
So valued were advice from thee" . . . But here
He stopped short: such a hubbub! Not alone

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From those addressed, but far as well as near
The crowd broke into clamor: "Mine, mine, mine —
Lop from my life the excrescence, never fear!

"At me thou lookedst, markedst me! Assign
To me that privilege of granting life —
Mine, mine!" Then he: "Be patient! I combine

"The needful portions only, wage no strife
With Nature's law nor seek to lengthen out
The Rabbi's day unduly. 'T is the knife

"I stop, — would cut its thread too short. About
As much as helps life last the proper term,
The appointed Fourscore, — that I crave, and scout

"A too-prolonged existence. Let the worm
Change at fit season to the butterfly!
And here a story strikes me, to confirm

"This judgment. Of our worthies, none ranks high
As Perida who kept the famous school:
None rivalled him in patience: none! For why?

"In lecturing it was his constant rule,
Whatever he expounded, to repeat
— Ay, and keep on repeating, lest some fool

"Should fail to understand him fully — (feat
Unparalleled, Uzzean!) — do ye mark? —
Five hundred times! So might he entrance beat

"For knowledge into howsoever dark
And dense the brain-pan. Yet it happed, at close
Of one especial lecture, not one spark

"Of light was found to have illumed the rows
Of pupils round their pedagogue. 'What, still
Impenetrable to me? Then — here goes!'

"And for a second time he sets the rill
Of knowledge running, and five hundred times
More re-repeats the matter — and gains *nil.*

"Out broke a voice from heaven: 'Thy patience climbs
Even thus high. Choose! Wilt thou, rather, quick
Ascend to bliss — or, since thy zeal sublimes

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" 'Such drudgery, will thy back still bear its crick,
Bent o'er thy class, — thy voice drone spite of drouth, —
Five hundred years more at thy desk wilt stick?'

" 'To heaven with me!' was in the good man's mouth,
When all his scholars — cruel-kind were they! —
Stopped utterance, from East, West, North and South,

" Rending the welkin with their shout of 'Nay —
No heaven as yet for our instructor! Grant
Five hundred years on earth for Perida!'

" And so long did he keep instructing! Want
Our Master no such misery! I but take
Three months of life marital. Ministrant

" Be thou of so much, Poet! Bold I make,
Swordsman, with thy frank offer! — and conclude,
Statist, with thine! One year, — ye will not shake

" My purpose to accept no more. So rude?
The very boys and girls, forsooth, must press
And proffer their addition? Thanks! The mood

" Is laudable, but I reject, no less,
One month, week, day of life more. Leave my gown,
Ye overbold ones! Your life's gift, you guess,

" Were good as any? Rudesby, get thee down!
Set my feet free, or fear my staff! Farewell,
Seniors and saviors, sharers of renown

" With Jochanan henceforward!" Straightway fell
Sleep on the sufferer; who awoke in health,
Hale everyway, so potent was the spell.

O the rare Spring-time! Who is he by stealth
Approaches Jochanan? — embowered that sits
Under his vine and figtree 'mid the wealth

Of garden-sights and sounds, since intermits
Never the turtle's coo, nor stays nor stints
The rose her smell. In homage that befits

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The musing Master, Tsaddik, see, imprints
A kiss on the extended foot, low bends
Forehead to earth, then, all-obsequious, hints

"What if it should be time? A period ends —
That of the Lover's gift — his quarter-year
Of lustihood: 't is just thou make amends,

"Return that loan with usury: so, here
Come I, of thy Disciples delegate,
Claiming our lesson from thee. Make appear

"Thy profit from experience! Plainly state
How men should Love!" Thus he: and to him thus
The Rabbi: "Love, ye call it? — rather, Hate!

"What wouldst thou? Is it needful I discuss
Wherefore new sweet wine, poured in bottles caked
With old strong wine's deposit, offers us

"Spoilt liquor we recoil from, thirst-unslaked?
Like earth-smoke from a crevice, out there wound —
Languors and yearnings: not a sense but ached

"Weighed on by fancied form and feature, sound
Of silver word and sight of sunny smile:
No beckoning of a flower-branch, no profound

"Purple of noon-oppression, no light wile
O' the West wind, but transformed itself till — brief —
Before me stood the phantasy ye style

"Youth's love, the joy that shall not come to grief,
Born to endure, eternal, unimpaired
By custom the accloyer, time the thief.

"Had Age's hard cold knowledge only spared
That ignorance of Youth! But now the dream,
Fresh as from Paradise, alighting fared

"As fares the pigeon, finding what may seem
Her nest's safe hollow holds a snake inside
Coiled to enclasp her. See, Eve stands supreme

"In youth and beauty! Take her for thy bride!
What Youth deemed crystal, Age finds out was dew
Morn set a-sparkle, but which noon quick dried

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"While Youth bent gazing at its red and blue
Supposed perennial, — never dreamed the sun
Which kindled the display would quench it too.

"Graces of shape and color — everyone
With its appointed period of decay
When ripe to purpose! 'Still, these dead and done,

"'Survives the woman-nature — the soft sway
Of undefinable omnipotence
O'er our strong male-stuff, we of Adam's clay.'

"Ay, if my physics taught not why and whence
The attraction! Am I like the simple steer
Who, from his pasture lured inside the fence,

"Where yoke and goad await him, holds that mere
Kindliness prompts extension of the hand
Hollowed for barley, which drew near and near

"His nose — in proof that, of the horned band,
The farmer best affected him? Beside,
Steer, since his calfhood, got to understand

"Farmers a many in the world so wide
Were ready with a handful just as choice
Or choicer — maize and cummin, treats untried.

"Shall I wed wife, and all my days rejoice
I gained the peacock? 'Las me, round I look,
And lo — 'With me thou wouldst have blamed no voice

"'Like hers that daily deafens like a rook:
I am the phœnix!' — 'I, the lark, the dove,
— The owl,' for aught knows he who blindly took

"Peacock for partner, while the vale, the grove,
The plain held bird-mates in abundance. There!
Youth, try fresh capture! Age has found out Love

"Long ago. War seems better worth man's care.
But leave me! Disappointment finds a balm
Haply in slumber." "This first step o' the stair

"To knowledge fails me, but the victor's palm
Lies on the next to tempt him overleap
A stumbling-block. Experience, gather calm,

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"Thou excellence of Judah, cured by sleep
Which ushers in the Warrior, to replace
The Lover! At due season I shall reap

"Fruit of my planting'" So, with lengthened face,
Departed Tsaddik: and three moons more waxed
And waned, and not until the summer-space

Waned likewise, any second visit taxed
The Rabbi's patience. But at three months' end,
Behold, supine beneath a rock, relaxed

The sage lay musing till the noon should spend
Its ardor. Up comes Tsaddik, who but he,
With "Master, may I warn thee, nor offend,

"That time comes round again? We look to see
Sprout from the old branch — not the youngling twig —
But fruit of sycamine: deliver me,

"To share among my fellows, some plump fig,
Juicy as seedy! That same man of war,
Who, with a scantling of his store, made big

"Thy starveling nature, caused thee, safe from scar,
To share his gains by long acquaintanceship
With bump and bruise and all the knocks that are

"Of battle dowry, — he bids loose thy lip,
Explain the good of battle! Since thou know'st,
Let us know likewise! Fast the moments slip,

"More need that we improve them!" — "Ay, we boast,
We warriors in our youth, that with the sword
Man goes the swiftliest to the uttermost —

"Takes the straight way through lands yet unexplored
To absolute Right and Good, — may so obtain
God's glory and man's weal too long ignored,

"Too late attained by preachments all in vain, —
The passive process. Knots get tangled worse
By toying with: does cut cord close again?

"Moreover there is blessing in the curse
Peace-praisers call war. What so sure evolves
All the capacities of soul, proves nurse

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" Of that self-sacrifice in men which solves
The riddle — *Wherein differs Man from beast?*
Foxes boast cleverness and courage wolves:

" Nowhere but in mankind is found the least
Touch of an impulse 'To our fellows — good
I' the highest! — not diminished but increased

" 'By the condition plainly understood
— Such good shall be attained at price of hurt
I' the highest to ourselves!' Fine sparks, that brood

" Confusedly in Man, 't is war bids spurt
Forth into flame: as fares the meteor-mass,
Whereof no particle but holds inert

" Some seed of light and heat, however crass
The enclosure, yet avails not to discharge
Its radiant birth before there come to pass

" Some push external, — strong to set at large
Those dormant fire-seeds, whirl them in a trice
Through heaven, and light up earth from marge to marge:

" Since force by motion makes — what erst was ice —
Crash into fervency and so expire,
Because some Djinn has hit on a device

" For proving the full prettiness of fire!
Ay, thus we prattle — young: but old — why, first,
Where 's that same Right and Good — (the wise inquire) —

" So absolute, it warrants the outburst
Of blood, tears, all war's woful consequence,
That comes of the fine flaring? Which plague cursed

" The more your benefited Man — offence,
Or what suppressed the offender? Say it did —
Show us the evil cured by violence,

" Submission cures not also! Lift the lid
From the maturing crucible, we find
Its slow sure coaxing-out of virtue, hid

" In that same meteor-mass, hath uncombined
Those particles and, yielding for result
Gold, not mere flame, by so much leaves behind

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"The heroic product. E'en the simple cult
Of Edom's children wisely bids them turn
Cheek to the smiter with '*Sic Jesus vult.*'

"Say there 's a tyrant by whose death we earn
Freedom, and justify a war to wage:
Good! — were we only able to discern

"Exactly how to reach and catch and cage
Him only and no innocent beside!
Whereas the folk whereon war wreaks its rage

"— How shared they his ill-doing? Far and wide
The victims of our warfare strew the plain,
Ten thousand dead, whereof not one but died

"In faith that vassals owed their suzerain
Life: therefore each paid tribute — honest soul —
To that same Right and Good ourselves are fain

"To call exclusively our end. From bole
(Since ye accept in me a sycamine)
Pluck, eat, digest a fable — yea, the sole

"Fig I afford you! 'Dost thou dwarf my vine?'
(So did a certain husbandman address
The tree which faced his field.) 'Receive condign

"'Punishment, prompt removal by the stress
Of axe I forthwith lay unto thy root!'
Long did he hack and hew, the root no less

"As long defied him, for its tough strings shoot
As deep down as the boughs above aspire:
All that he did was — shake to the tree's foot

"Leafage and fruitage, things we most require
For shadow and refreshment: which good deed
Thoroughly done, behold the axe-haft tires

"His hand, and he desisting leaves unfreed
The vine he hacked and hewed for. Comes a frost,
One natural night's-work, and there 's little need

"Of hacking, hewing: lo, the tree 's a ghost!
Perished it starves, black death from topmost bough
To farthest-reaching fibre! Shall I boast

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"My rough work — warfare — helped more? Loving, now —
That, by comparison, seems wiser, since
The loving fool was able to avow

"He could effect his purpose, just evince
Love's willingness, — once 'ware of what she lacked,
His loved one, — to go work for that, nor wince

"At self-expenditure: he neither hacked
Nor hewed, but when the lady of his field
Required defence because the sun attacked,

"He, failing to obtain a fitter shield,
Would interpose his body, and so blaze,
Blest in the burning. Ah, were mine to wield

"The intellectual weapon — poet-lays, —
How preferably had I sung one song
Which . . . but my sadness sinks me: go your ways!

"I sleep out disappointment." "Come along,
Never lose heart! There 's still as much again
Of our bestowment left to right the wrong

"Done by its earlier moiety — explain
Wherefore, who may! The Poet's mood comes next.
Was he not wishful the poetic vein

"Should pulse within him? Jochanan, thou reck'st
Little of what a generous flood shall soon
Float thy clogged spirit free and unperplexed

"Above dry dubitation! Song 's the boon
Shall make amends for my untoward mistake
That Joshua-like thou couldst bid sun and moon —

"Fighter and Lover, — which for most men make
All they descry in heaven, — stand both stock-still
And lend assistance. Poet shalt thou wake!"

Autumn brings Tsaddik. "Ay, there speeds the rill
Loaded with leaves: a scowling sky, beside:
The wind makes olive-trees up yonder hill

"Whiten and shudder — symptoms far and wide
Of gleaning-time's approach; and glean good store
May I presume to trust we shall, thou tried

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"And ripe experimenter! Three months more
Have ministered to growth of Song: that graft
Into thy sterile stock has found at core

"Moisture, I warrant, hitherto unquaffed
By boughs, however florid, wanting sap
Of prose-experience which provides the draught

"Which song-sprouts, wanting, wither: vain we tap
A youngling stem all green and immature;
Experience must secrete the stuff, our hap

"Will be to quench Man's thirst with, glad and sure
That fancy wells up through corrective fact:
Missing which test of truth, though flowers allure

"The goodman's eye with promise, soon the pact
Is broken, and 't is flowers — mere words — he finds
When things — that 's fruit — he looked for. Well, once cracked

"The nut, how glad my tooth the kernel grinds!
Song may henceforth boast substance! Therefore, hail
Proser and poet, perfect in both kinds!

"Thou from whose eye hath dropped the envious scale
Which hides the truth of things and substitutes
Deceptive show, unaided optics fail

"To transpierce, — hast entrusted to the lute's
Soft but sure guardianship some unrevealed
Secret shall lift mankind above the brutes

"As only knowledge can?" "A fount unsealed"
(Sighed Jochanan) "should seek the heaven in leaps
To die in dew-gems — not find death, congealed

"By contact with the cavern's nether deeps,
Earth's secretest foundation where, enswathed
In dark and fear, primeval mystery sleeps —

"Petrific fount wherein my fancies bathed
And straight turned ice. My dreams of good and fair
In soaring upwards had dissolved, unscathed

"By any influence of the kindly air,
Singing, as each took flight, 'The Future — that 's
Our destination, mists turn rainbows there,

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"'Which sink to fog, confounded in the flats
O' the Present! Day 's the song-time for the lark,
Night for her music boasts but owls and bats.

"'And what 's the Past but night — the deep and dark
Ice-spring I speak of, corpse-thicked with its drowned
Dead fancies which no sooner touched the mark

"'They aimed at — fact — than all at once they found
Their film-wings freeze, henceforth unfit to reach
And roll in ether, revel — robed and crowned

"'As truths confirmed by falsehood all and each —
Sovereign and absolute and ultimate!
Up with them, skyward, Youth, ere Age impeach

"'Thy least of promises to reinstate
Adam in Eden!' Sing on, ever sing,
Chirp till thou burst! — the fool cicada's fate,

"Who holds that after Summer next comes Spring,
Than Summer's self sun-warmed, spice-scented more.
Fighting was better! There, no fancy-fling

"Pitches you past the point was reached of yore
By Samsons, Abners, Joabs, Judases,
The mighty men of valor who, before

"Our little day, did wonders none profess
To doubt were fable and not fact, so trust
By fancy-flights to emulate much less.

"Were I a Statesman, now! Why, that were just
To pinnacle my soul, mankind above,
A-top the universe: no vulgar lust

"To gratify — fame, greed, at this remove
Looked down upon so far — or overlooked
So largely, rather — that mine eye should rove

"World-wide and rummage earth, the many-nooked,
Yet find no unit of the human flock
Caught straying but straight comes back hooked and crooked

"By the strong shepherd who, from out his stock
Of aids proceeds to treat each ailing fleece,
Here stimulate to growth, curtail and dock

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"There, baldness or excrescence, — that, with grease,
This, with up-grubbing of the bristly patch
Born of the tick-bite. How supreme a peace

"Steals o'er the Statist, — while, in wit, a match
For shrewd Ahithophel, in wisdom . . . well,
His name escapes me — somebody, at watch

"And ward, the fellow of Ahithophel
In guidance of the Chosen!" — at which word
Eyes closed and fast asleep the Rabbi fell.

"Cold weather!" shivered Tsaddik. "Yet the hoard
Of the sagacious ant shows garnered grain,
Ever abundant most when fields afford

"Least pasture, and alike disgrace the plain
Tall tree and lowly shrub. 'T is so with us
Mortals: our age stores wealth ye seek in vain

"While busy youth culls just what we discuss
At leisure in the last days: and the last
Truly are these for Jochanan, whom thus

"I make one more appeal to! Thine amassed
Experience, now or never, let escape
Some portion of! For I perceive aghast

"The end approaches, while they jeer and jape,
These sons of Shimei: 'Justify your boast!
What have ye gained from Death by twelve months' rape?

"Statesman, what cure hast thou for — least and most —
Popular grievances? What nostrum, say,
Will make the Rich and Poor, expertly dosed,

"Forget disparity, bid each go gay,
That, with his bauble, — with his burden, this?
Propose an alkahest shall melt away

"Men's lacquer, show by prompt analysis
Which is the metal, which the make-believe,
So that no longer brass shall find, gold miss

"Coinage and currency? Make haste, retrieve
The precious moments, Master!" Whereunto
There snarls an "Ever laughing in thy sleeve,

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"Pert Tsaddik? Youth indeed sees plain a clue
To guide man where life's wood is intricate:
How shall he fail to thrid its thickest through

"When every oak-trunk takes the eye? Elate
He goes from bole to brushwood, plunging finds —
Smothered in briers — that the small 's the great!

"All men are men: I would all minds were minds!
Whereas 't is just the many's mindless mass
That most needs helping: laborers and hinds

"We legislate for — not the cultured class
Which law-makes for itself nor needs the whip
And bridle, — proper help for mule and ass,

"Did the brutes know! In vain our statesmanship
Strives at contenting the rough multitude:
Still the ox cries 'T is me thou shouldst equip

"'With equine trappings!' or, in humbler mood,
'Cribful of corn for me! and, as for work —
Adequate rumination o'er my food!'

"Better remain a Poet! Needs it irk
Such an one if light, kindled in his sphere,
Fail to transfuse the Mizraim cold and murk

"Round about Goshen? Though light disappear,
Shut inside, — temporary ignorance
Got outside of, lo, light emerging clear

"Shows each astonished starer the expanse
Of heaven made bright with knowledge! That 's the way,
The only way — I see it at a glance —

"To legislate for earth! As poet . . . Stay!
What is . . . I would that . . . were it . . . I had been . . .
O sudden change, as if my arid clay

"Burst into bloom!" . . . "A change indeed, I ween,
And change the last!" sighed Tsaddik as he kissed
The closing eyelids. "Just as those serene

"Princes of Night apprised me! Our acquist
Of life is spent, since corners only four
Hath Aisch, and each in turn was made desist

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"In passage round the Pole (O Mishna's lore —
Little it profits here!) by strenuous tug
Of friends who eked out thus to full fourscore

"The Rabbi's years. I see each shoulder shrug!
What have we gained? Away the Bier may roll!
To-morrow, when the Master's grave is dug,

"In with his body I may pitch the scroll
I hoped to glorify with, text and gloss,
My Science of Man's Life: one blank 's the whole!

"Love, war, song, statesmanship — no gain, all loss,
The stars' bestowment! We on our return
To-morrow merely find — not gold but dross,

"The body not the soul. Come, friends, we learn
At least thus much by our experiment —
That — that . . . well, find what, whom it may concern!"

But next day through the city rumors went
Of a new persecution; so, they fled
All Israel, each man, — this time, — from his tent,

Tsaddik among the foremost. When, the dread
Subsiding, Israel ventured back again
Some three months after, to the cave they sped

Where lay the Sage, — a reverential train!
Tsaddik first enters. "What is this I view?
The Rabbi still alive? No stars remain

"Of Aisch to stop within their courses. True,
I mind me, certain gamesome boys must urge
Their offerings on me: can it be — one threw

"Life at him and it stuck? There needs the scourge
To teach that urchin manners! Prithee, grant
Forgiveness if we pretermit thy dirge

"Just to explain no friend was ministrant,
This time, of life to thee! Some jackanapes,
I gather, has presumed to foist his scant

"Scurvy unripe existence — wilding grapes
Grass-green and sorrel-sour — on that grand wine,
Mighty as mellow, which, so fancy shapes

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"May fitly image forth this life of thine
Fed on the last low fattening lees — condensed
Elixir, no milk-mildness of the vine!

"Rightly with Tsaddik wert thou now incensed
Had he been witting of the mischief wrought
When, for elixir, verjuice he dispensed!"

And slowly woke, — like Shushan's flower besought
By over-curious handling to unloose
The curtained secrecy wherein she thought

Her captive bee, 'mid store of sweets to choose,
Would loll, in gold pavilioned lie unteased,
Sucking on, sated never, — whose, O whose

Might seem that countenance, uplift, all eased
Of old distraction and bewilderment,
Absurdly happy? "How ye have appeased

"The strife within me, bred this whole content,
This utter acquiescence in my past,
Present and future life, — by whom was lent

"The power to work this miracle at last, —
Exceeds my guess. Though — *ignorance confirmed*
By knowledge sounds like paradox, I cast

"Vainly about to tell you — fitlier termed —
Of calm struck by encountering opposites,
Each nullifying either! Henceforth wormed

"From out my heart is every snake that bites
The dove that else would brood there: doubt, which kills
With hiss of 'What if sorrows end delights?'

"Fear which stings ease with 'Work the Master wills!'
Experience which coils round and strangles quick
Each hope with 'Ask the Past if hoping skills

"'To work accomplishment, or proves a trick
Wiling thee to endeavor! Strive, fool, stop
Nowise, so live, so die — that's law! why kick

"'Against the pricks?' All out-wormed! Slumber, drop
Thy films once more and veil the bliss within!
Experience strangle hope? Hope waves a-top

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"Her wings triumphant! Come what will, I win,
Whoever loses! Every dream 's assured
Of soberest fulfilment. Where 's a sin

"Except in doubting that the light, which lured
The unwary into darkness, meant no wrong
Had I but marched on bold, nor paused immured

"By mists I should have pressed through, passed along
My way henceforth rejoicing? Not the boy's
Passionate impulse he conceits so strong,

"Which, at first touch, truth, bubble-like, destroys, —
Not the man's slow conviction 'Vanity
Of vanities — alike my griefs and joys!'

"Ice! — thawed (look up) each bird, each insect by —
(Look round) by all the plants that break in bloom,
(Look down) by every dead friend's memory

"That smiles 'Am I the dust within my tomb?'
Not either, but both these — amalgam rare —
Mix in a product, not from Nature's womb,

"But stuff which He the Operant — who shall dare
Describe His operation? — strikes alive
And thaumaturgic. I nor know nor care

"How from this tohu-bohu — hopes which dive,
And fears which soar — faith, ruined through and through
By doubt, and doubt, faith treads to dust — revive

"In some surprising sort, — as see, they do! —
Not merely foes no longer but fast friends.
What does it mean unless — O strange and new

"Discovery! — this life proves a wine-press — blends
Evil and good, both fruits of Paradise,
Into a novel drink which — who intends

"To quaff, must bear a brain for ecstasies
Attempered, not this all-inadequate
Organ which, quivering within me, dies

"— Nay, lives! — what, how, — too soon, or else too late —
I was — I am" . . . ("He babbleth!" Tsaddik mused.)
"O Thou Almighty, who canst reinstate

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"Truths in their primal clarity, confused
By man's perception, which is man's and made
To suit his service, — how, once disabused

"Of reason which sees light half shine half shade,
Because of flesh, the medium that adjusts
Purity to his visuals, both an aid

"And hindrance, — how to eyes earth's air encrusts,
When purged and perfect to receive truth's beam
Pouring itself on the new sense it trusts

"With all its plenitude of power, — how seem
The intricacies now, of shade and shine,
Oppugnant natures — Right and Wrong, we deem

"Irreconcilable? O eyes of mine,
Freed now of imperfection, ye avail
To see the whole sight, nor may uncombine

"Henceforth what, erst divided, caused you quail —
So huge the chasm between the false and true,
The dream and the reality! All hail,

"Day of my soul's deliverance — day the new,
The never-ending! What though every shape
Whereon I wreaked my yearning to pursue

"Even to success each semblance of escape
From my own bounded self to some all-fair
All-wise external fancy, proved a rape

"Like that old giant's, feigned of fools — on air,
Not solid flesh? How otherwise? To love —
That lesson was to learn not here — but there —

"On earth, not here! 'T is there we learn, — there prove
Our parts upon the stuff we needs must spoil,
Striving at mastery, there bend above

"The spoiled clay potsherds, many a year of toil
Attests the potter tried his hand upon,
Till sudden he arose, wiped free from soil

"His hand, cried 'So much for attempt — anon
Performance! Taught to mould the living vase,
What matter the cracked pitchers dead and gone?'

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"Could I impart and could thy mind embrace
The secret, Tsaddik!" "Secret none to me!"
Quoth Tsaddik, as the glory on the face

Of Jochanan was quenched. "The truth I see
Of what that excellence of Judah wrote,
Doughty Halaphta. This a case must be

"Wherein, though the last breath have passed the throat,
So that 'The man is dead' we may pronounce,
Yet is the Ruach — (thus do we denote

"The imparted Spirit) — in no haste to bounce
From its entrusted Body, — some three days
Lingers ere it relinquish to the pounce

"Of hawk-clawed Death his victim. Further says
Halaphta, 'Instances have been, and yet
Again may be, when saints, whose earthly ways

"'Tend to perfection, very nearly get
To heaven while still on earth: and, as a fine
Interval shows where waters pure have met

"'Waves brackish, in a mixture, sweet with brine,
That 's neither sea nor river but a taste
Of both — so meet the earthly and divine

"And each is either.' Thus I hold him graced —
Dying on earth, half inside and half out,
Wholly in heaven, who knows? My mind embraced

"Thy secret, Jochanan, how dare I doubt?
Follow thy Ruach, let earth, all it can,
Keep of the leavings!" Thus was brought about

The sepulture of Rabbi Jochanan:
Thou hast him, — sinner-saint, live-dead, boy-man, —
Schiphaz, on Bendimir, in Farzistan!

NOTE. — This story can have no better authority than that of the treatise, existing dispersedly in fragments of Rabbinical writing, משך של רבים בדים, from which I might have helped myself more liberally. Thus, instead of the simple reference to "Moses' stick,"

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— but what if I make amends by attempting three illustrations, when some thirty might be composed on the same subject, equally justifying that pithy proverb ממשה עד משה לא קם כמשה.

I.

Moses the Meek was thirty cubits high,
The staff he strode with — thirty cubits long ;
And when he leapt, so muscular and strong
Was Moses that his leaping neared the sky
By thirty cubits more : we learn thereby
He reached full ninety cubits — am I wrong ? —
When, in a fight slurred o'er by sacred song,
With staff outstretched he took a leap to try
The just dimensions of the giant Og.
And yet he barely touched — this marvel lacked
Posterity to crown earth's catalogue
Of marvels — barely touched — to be exact —
The giant's ankle-bone, remained a frog
That fain would match an ox in stature : fact !

II.

And this same fact has met with unbelief !
How saith a certain traveller ? "Young, I chanced
To come upon an object — if thou canst,
Guess me its name and nature ! 'T was, in brief,
White, hard, round, hollow, of such length, in chief,
— And this is what especially enhanced
My wonder — that it seemed, as I advanced,
Never to end. Bind up within thy sheaf
Of marvels, this — Posterity ! I walked
From end to end, — four hours walked I, who go
A goodly pace, — and found — I have not balked
Thine expectation, Stranger ? Ay or No ? —
'T was but Og's thighbone, all the while, I stalked
Alongside of : respect to Moses, though !

III.

Og's thighbone — if ye deem its measure strange,
Myself can witness to much length of shank
Even in birds. Upon a water's bank
Once halting, I was minded to exchange
Noon heat for cool. Quoth I, "On many a grange
I have seen storks perch — legs both long and lank :
Yon stork's must touch the bottom of this tank,
Since on its top doth wet no plume derange
Of the smooth breast. I 'll bathe there !" "Do not so !"
Warned me a voice from heaven. "A man let drop

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His axe into that shallow rivulet —
As thou accountest — seventy years ago:
It fell and fell and still without a stop
Keeps falling, nor has reached the bottom yet."

NEVER THE TIME AND THE PLACE.

NEVER the time and the place
And the loved one all together!
This path — how soft to pace!
This May — what magic weather!
Where is the loved one's face?
In a dream that loved one's face meets mine,
But the house is narrow, the place is bleak
Where, outside, rain and wind combine
With a furtive ear, if I strive to speak,
With a hostile eye at my flushing cheek,
With a malice that marks each word, each sign!
O enemy sly and serpentine,
Uncoil thee from the waking man!
Do I hold the Past
Thus firm and fast
Yet doubt if the Future hold I can?
This path so soft to pace shall lead
Through the magic of May to herself indeed!
Or narrow if needs the house must be,
Outside are the storms and strangers: we —
Oh, close, safe, warm sleep I and she,
— I and she!

PAMBO.

SUPPOSE that we part (work done, comes play)
With a grave tale told in crambo
— As our hearty sires were wont to say —
Whereof the hero is Pambo?

Do you happen to know who Pambo was?
Nor I — but this much have heard of him:
He entered one day a college-class,
And asked — was it so absurd of him? —

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"May Pambo learn wisdom ere practise it?
In wisdom I fain would ground me:
Since wisdom is centred in Holy Writ,
Some psalm to the purpose expound me!"

"That psalm," the Professor smiled, "shall be
Untroubled by doubt which dirtieth
Pellucid streams when an ass like thee
Would drink there — the Nine-and-thirtieth.

"Verse First: *I said I will look to my ways*
That I with my tongue offend not.
How now? Why stare? Art struck in amaze?
Stop, stay! The smooth line hath an end knot!

"He 's gone! — disgusted my text should prove
Too easy to need explaining?
Had he waited, the blockhead might find I move
To matter that pays remaining!"

Long years went by, when — "Ha, who 's this?
Do I come on the restive scholar
I had driven to Wisdom's goal, I wis,
But that he slipped the collar?

"What? Arms crossed, brow bent, thought-immersed?
A student indeed! Why scruple
To own that the lesson proposed him first
Scarce suited so apt a pupil?

"Come back! From the beggarly elements
To a more recondite issue
We pass till we reach, at all events,
Some point that may puzzle . . . Why 'pish' you?"

From the ground looked piteous up the head:
"Daily and nightly, Master,
Your pupil plods through that text you read,
Yet gets on never the faster.

"At the selfsame stand, — now old, then young!
I will look to my ways — were doing
As easy as saying! — *that I with my tongue*
Offend not — and 'scape pooh-poohing

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" From sage and simple, doctor and dunce?
Ah, nowise! Still doubts so muddy
The stream I would drink at once, — but once!
That — thus I resume my study!"

Brother, brother, I share the blame,
Arcades sumus ambo!
Darkling, I keep my sunrise-aim,
Lack not the critic's flambeau,
And *look to my ways*, yet, much the same,
Offend with my tongue — like Pambo!

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FERISHTAH'S FANCIES

His genius was jocular, but, when disposed, he could be very serious. — Article "Shakespear," Jeremy Collier's *Historical etc. Dictionary*, 2d edition, 1701.

You, Sir, I entertain you for one of my Hundred; only, I do not like the fashion of your garments: you will say they are Persian: but let them be changed. — *King Lear*, Act III. Sc. 6.

PROLOGUE.

PRAY, Reader, have you eaten ortolans
Ever in Italy?
Recall how cooks there cook them: for my plan 's
To — Lyre with Spit ally.
They pluck the birds, — some dozen luscious lumps,
Or more or fewer, —
Then roast them, heads by heads and rumps by rumps,
Stuck on a skewer.
But first, — and here 's the point I fain would press, —
Don't think I 'm tattling! —
They interpose, to curb its lusciousness,
— What, 'twixt each fatling?
First comes plain bread, crisp, brown, a toasted square:
Then, a strong sage-leaf:
(So we find books with flowers dried here and there
Lest leaf engage leaf.)
First, food — then, piquancy — and last of all
Follows the thirdling:
Through wholesome hard, sharp soft, your tooth must bite
Ere reach the birdling.
Now, were there only crust to crunch, you 'd wince:
Unpalatable!
Sage-leaf is bitter-pungent — so 's a quince:
Eat each who 's able!
But through all three bite boldly — lo, the gust!
Flavor — no fixture —

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Flies permeating flesh and leaf and crust
In fine admixture.
So with your meal, my poem: masticate
Sense, sight, and song there!
Digest these, and I praise your peptics' state,
Nothing found wrong there.
Whence springs my illustration who can tell?
— The more surprising
That here eggs, milk, cheese, fruit suffice so well
For gormandizing.
A fancy-freak by contrast born of thee,
Delightful Gressoney!
Who laughest "Take what is, trust what may be!"
That 's Life's true lesson, — eh?

MAISON DELAPIERRE,
Gressoney St. Jean, Val d'Aosta,
September 12, '83.

I. THE EAGLE.

DERVISH — (though yet un-dervished, call him so
No less beforehand: while he drudged our way,
Other his worldly name was: when he wrote
Those versicles we Persians praise him for,
— True fairy-work — Ferishtah grew his style) —
Dervish Ferishtah walked the woods one eve,
And noted on a bough a raven's nest
Whereof each youngling gaped with callow beak
Widened by want; for why? beneath the tree
Dead lay the mother-bird. "A piteous chance!
How shall they 'scape destruction?" sighed the sage
— Or sage about to be, though simple still.
Responsive to which doubt, sudden there swooped
An eagle downward, and behold he bore
(Great-hearted) in his talons flesh wherewith
He stayed their craving, then resought the sky.
"Ah, foolish, faithless me!" the observer smiled,
"Who toil and moil to eke out life, when, lo,
Providence cares for every hungry mouth!"
To profit by which lesson, home went he,
And certain days sat musing, — neither meat
Nor drink would purchase by his handiwork.
Then — for his head swam and his limbs grew faint —
Sleep overtook the unwise one, whom in dream

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God thus admonished: "Hast thou marked my deed?
Which part assigned by providence dost judge
Was meant for man's example? Should he play
The helpless weakling, or the helpful strength
That captures prey and saves the perishing?
Sluggard, arise: work, eat, then feed who lack!"

Waking, "I have arisen, work I will,
Eat, and so following. Which lacks food the more,
Body or soul in me? I starve in soul:
So may mankind: and since men congregate
In towns, not woods, — to Ispahan forthwith!"

Round us the wild creatures, overhead the trees,
Underfoot the moss-tracks, — life and love with these!
I to wear a fawn-skin, thou to dress in flowers:
All the long lone summer-day, that greenwood life of ours!

Rich-pavilioned, rather, — still the world without, —
Inside — gold-roofed silk-walled silence round about!
Queen it thou on purple, — I, at watch and ward
Couched beneath the columns, gaze, thy slave, love's guard!

So, for us no world? Let throngs press thee to me!
Up and down amid men, heart by heart fare we!
Welcome squalid vesture, harsh voice, hateful face!
God is soul, souls I and thou: with souls should souls have place.

II. THE MELON-SELLER.

Going his rounds one day in Ispahan, —
Halfway on Dervishhood, not wholly there, —
Ferishtah, as he crossed a certain bridge,
Came startled on a well-remembered face.
"Can it be? What, turned melon-seller — thou?
Clad in such sordid garb, thy seat yon step
Where dogs brush by thee and express contempt?
Methinks, thy head-gear is some scooped-out gourd!
Nay, sunk to slicing up, for readier sale,
One fruit whereof the whole scarce feeds a swine?
Wast thou the Shah's Prime Minister, men saw
Ride on his right-hand while a trumpet blew
And Persia hailed the Favorite? Yea, twelve years

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Are past, I judge, since that transcendency,
And thou didst peculate and art abased;
No less, twelve years since, thou didst hold in hand
Persia, could'st halve and quarter, mince its pulp
As pleased thee, and distribute — melon-like —
Portions to whoso played the parasite,
Or suck — thyself — each juicy morsel. How
Enormous thy abjection, — hell from heaven,
Made tenfold hell by contrast! Whisper me!
Dost thou curse God for granting twelve years' bliss
Only to prove this day 's the direr lot?"

Whereon the beggar raised a brow, once more
Luminous and imperial, from the rags.
"Fool, does thy folly think my foolishness
Dwells rather on the fact that God appoints
A day of woe to the unworthy one,
Than that the unworthy one, by God's award,
Tasted joy twelve years long? Or buy a slice,
Or go to school!"
To school Ferishtah went;
And, schooling ended, passed from Ispahan
To Nishapur, that Elburz looks above
— Where they dig turquoise: there kept school himself,
The melon-seller's speech, his stock in trade.
Some say a certain Jew adduced the word
Out of their book, it sounds so much the same.
את־הטוב נהבל מאת האלהים
ואת־הרע לא נקבל: In Persian phrase,
"Shall we receive good at the hand of God
And evil not receive?" But great wits jump.

Wish no word unspoken, want no look away!
What if words were but mistake, and looks — too sudden, say!
Be unjust for once, Love! Bear it — well I may!

Do me justice always? Bid my heart — their shrine —
Render back its store of gifts, old looks and words of thine
— Oh, so all unjust — the less deserved, the more divine?

III. SHAH ABBAS.

ANYHOW, once full Dervish, youngsters came
To gather up his own words, 'neath a rock
Or else a palm, by pleasant Nishapur.

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Said someone, as Ferishtah paused abrupt,
Reading a certain passage from the roll
Wherein is treated of Lord Ali's life:
"Master, explain this incongruity!
When I dared question 'It is beautiful,
But is it true?' — thy answer was 'In truth
Lives beauty.' I persisting — 'Beauty — yes,
In thy mind and in my mind, every mind
That apprehends: but outside — so to speak —
Did beauty live in deed as well as word,
Was this life lived, was this death died — not dreamed?'
'Many attested it for fact,' saidst thou.
'Many!' but mark, Sir! Half as long ago
As such things were, — supposing that they were, —
Reigned great Shah Abbas: he too lived and died
— How say they? Why, so strong of arm, of foot
So swift, he stayed a lion in his leap
On a stag's haunch, — with one hand grasped the stag,
With one struck down the lion: yet, no less,
Himself, that same day, feasting after sport,
Perceived a spider drop into his wine,
Let fall the flagon, died of simple fear.
So all say, — so dost thou say?"
"Wherefore not?"
Ferishtah smiled: "though strange, the story stands
Clear-chronicled: none tells it otherwise:
The fact's eye-witness bore the cup, beside."

"And dost thou credit one cup-bearer's tale,
False, very like, and futile certainly,
Yet hesitate to trust what many tongues
Combine to testify was beautiful
In deed as well as word? No fool's report
Of lion, stag and spider, but immense
With meaning for mankind, — thy race, thyself?"

Whereto the Dervish: "First amend, my son,
Thy faulty nomenclature, call belief
Belief indeed, nor grace with such a name
The easy acquiescence of mankind
In matters nowise worth dispute, since life
Lasts merely the allotted moment. Lo —
That lion-stag-and-spider tale leaves fixed
The fact for us that somewhen Abbas reigned,
Died, somehow slain, — a useful registry, —
Which therefore we — 'believe'? Stand forward, thou,
My Yakub, son of Yusuf, son of Zal!

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I advertise thee that our liege, the Shah
Happily regnant, hath become assured,
By opportune discovery, that thy sires,
Son by the father upwards, track their line
To — whom but that same bearer of the cup
Whose inadvertency was chargeable
With what therefrom ensued, disgust and death
To Abbas Shah, the over-nice of soul?
Whence he appoints thee, — such his clemency, —
Not death, thy due, but just a double tax
To pay, on thy particular bed of reeds
Which flower into the brush that makes a broom
Fit to sweep ceilings clear of vermin. Sure,
Thou dost believe the story nor dispute
That punishment should signalize its truth?
Down therefore with some twelve dinars! Why start,
— The stag's way with the lion hard on haunch?
'Believe the story?' — how thy words throng fast! —
'Who saw this, heard this, said this, wrote down this
That and the other circumstance to prove
So great a prodigy surprised the world?
Needs must thou prove me fable can be fact
Or ere thou coax one piece from out my pouch!'"

"There we agree, Sir: neither of us knows,
Neither accepts that tale on evidence
Worthy to warrant the large word — belief.
Now I get near thee! Why didst pause abrupt,
Disabled by emotion at a tale
Might match — be frank! — for credibility
The figment of the spider and the cup?
— To wit, thy roll's concerning Ali's life,
Unevidenced — thine own word! Little boots
Our sympathy with fiction! When I read
The annals and consider of Tahmasp
And that sweet sun-surpassing star his love,
I weep like a cut vine-twig, though aware
Zurah's sad fate is fiction, since the snake
He saw devour her, — how could such exist,
Having nine heads? No snake boasts more than three!
I weep, then laugh — both actions right alike.
But thou, Ferishtah, sapiency confessed,
When at the Day of Judgment God shall ask
'Didst thou believe?' — what wilt thou plead? Thy tears!
(Nay, they fell fast and stain the parchment still.)
What if thy tears meant love? Love lacking ground

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— Belief, — avails thee as it would avail
My own pretence to favor since, forsooth,
I loved the lady — I, who needs must laugh
To hear a snake boasts nine heads: they have three!"

"Thanks for the well-timed help that 's born, behold,
Out of thy words, my son, — belief and love!
Hast heard of Ishak son of Absal? Ay,
The very same we heard of, ten years since,
Slain in the wars: he comes back safe and sound, —
Though twenty soldiers saw him die at Yezdt, —
Just as a single mule-and-baggage boy
Declared 't was like he some day would, — for why?
The twenty soldiers lied, he saw him stout,
Cured of all wounds at once by smear of salve,
A Mubid's manufacture: such the tale.
Now, when his pair of sons were thus apprised
Effect was twofold on them. 'Hail!' crowed This:
'Dearer the news than dayspring after night!
The cure-reporting youngster warrants me
Our father shall make glad our eyes once more,
For whom, had outpoured life of mine sufficed
To bring him back, free broached were every vein!'
'Avaunt, delusive tale-concocter, news
Cruel as meteor simulating dawn!'
Whimpered the other: 'Who believes this boy,
Must disbelieve his twenty seniors: no,
Return our father shall not! Might my death
Purchase his life, how promptly would the dole
Be paid as due!' Well, ten years pass, — aha,
Ishak is marching homeward, — doubts, not he,
Are dead and done with! So, our townsfolk straight
Must take on them to counsel. 'Go thou gay,
Welcome thy father, thou of ready faith!
Hide thee, contrariwise, thou faithless one,
Expect paternal frowning, blame and blows!'
So do our townsfolk counsel: dost demur?"

"Ferishtah like those simpletons — at loss
In what is plain as pikestaff? Pish! Suppose
The trustful son had sighed 'So much the worse!
Returning means — retaking heritage
Enjoyed these ten years, who should say me nay?'
How would such trust reward him? Trustlessness
— O' the other hand — were what procured most praise
To him who judged return impossible,

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Yet hated heritage procured thereby.
A fool were Ishak if he failed to prize
Mere head's work less than heart's work: no fool he!"

"Is God less wise? Resume the roll!" They did.

You groped your way across my room i' the drear dark dead of night;
At each fresh step a stumble was: but, once your lamp alight,
Easy and plain you walked again: so soon all wrong grew right!

What lay on floor to trip your foot? Each object, late awry,
Looked fitly placed, nor proved offence to footing free — for why?
The lamp showed all, discordant late, grown simple symmetry.

Be love your light and trust your guide, with these explore my heart!
No obstacle to trip you then, strike hands and souls apart!
Since rooms and hearts are furnished so, — light shows you, — needs love start?

IV. THE FAMILY.

A CERTAIN neighbor lying sick to death,
Ferishtah grieved beneath a palm-tree, whence
He rose at peace: whereat objected one
"Gudarz our friend gasps in extremity.
Sure, thou art ignorant how close at hand
Death presses, or the cloud, which fouled so late
Thy face, had deepened down not lightened off."

"I judge there will be respite, for I prayed."

"Sir, let me understand, of charity!
Yestereve, what was thine admonishment?
'All-wise, all-good, all-mighty — God is such!'
How then should man, the all-unworthy, dare
Propose to set aside a thing ordained?
To pray means — substitute man's will for God's:
Two best wills cannot be: by consequence,
What is man bound to but — assent, say I?
Rather to rapture of thanksgiving; since
That which seems worst to man to God is best,

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So, because God ordains it, best to man.
Yet man — the foolish, weak, and wicked — prays!
Urges 'My best were better, didst Thou know'!"

"List to a tale. A worthy householder
Of Shiraz had three sons, beside a spouse
Whom, cutting gourds, a serpent bit, whereon
The offended limb swelled black from foot to fork.
The husband called in aid a leech renowned
World-wide, confessed the lord of surgery,
And bade him dictate — who forthwith declared
'Sole remedy is amputation.' Straight
The husband sighed 'Thou knowest: be it so!'
His three sons, heard their mother sentenced: 'Pause!'
Outbroke the elder: 'Be precipitate
Nowise, I pray thee! Take some gentler way,
Thou sage of much resource! I will not doubt
But science still may save foot, leg, and thigh!'
The next in age snapped petulant: 'Too rash!
No reason for this maiming! What, Sir Leech,
Our parent limps henceforward while we leap?
Shame on thee! Save the limb thou must and shalt!'
'Shame on yourselves, ye bold ones!' followed up
The brisk third brother, youngest, pertest too:
'The leech knows all things, we are ignorant;
What he proposes, gratefully accept!
For me, had I some unguent bound to heal
Hurts in a twinkling, hardly would I dare
Essay its virtue and so cross the sage
By cure his skill pronounces folly. Quick!
No waiting longer! There the patient lies:
Out then with implements and operate!'"

"Ah, the young devil!"

"Why, his reason chimed
Right with the Hakim's."

"Hakim's, ay — but chit's?
How? what the skilled eye saw and judged of weight
To overbear a heavy consequence,
That — shall a sciolist affect to see?
All he saw — that is, all such oaf should see,
Was just the mother's suffering."

"In my tale,
Be God the Hakim: in the husband's case,

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Call ready acquiescence — aptitude
Angelic, understanding swift and sure:
Call the first son — a wise humanity,
Slow to conceive but duteous to adopt:
See in the second son — humanity,
Wrong-headed yet right-hearted, rash but kind.
Last comes the cackler of the brood, our chit
Who, aping wisdom all beyond his years,
Thinks to discard humanity itself:
Fares like the beast which should affect to fly
Because a bird with wings may spurn the ground,
So, missing heaven and losing earth — drops how
But hell-ward? No, be man and nothing more —
Man who, as man conceiving, hopes and fears,
And craves and deprecates, and loves, and loathes,
And bids God help him, till death touch his eyes
And show God granted most, denying all."

Man I am and man would be, Love — merest man and nothing more.
Bid me seem no other! Eagles boast of pinions — let them soar!
I may put forth angel's plumage, once unmanned, but not before.

Now on earth, to stand suffices, — nay, if kneeling serves, to kneel:
Here you front me, here I find the all of heaven that earth can feel:
Sense looks straight, — not over, under, — perfect sees beyond appeal.

Good you are and wise, full circle: what to me were more outside?
Wiser wisdom, better goodness? Ah, such want the angel's wide
Sense to take and hold and keep them! Mine at least has never tried.

V. THE SUN.

"And what might that bold man's announcement be" —
Ferishtah questioned — "which so moved thine ire
That thou didst curse, nay, cuff and kick — in short,
Confute the announcer? Wipe those drops away
Which start afresh upon thy face at mere
Mention of such enormity: now, speak!"

"He scrupled not to say — (thou warrantest,
O patient Sir, that I unblamed repeat

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Abominable words which blister tongue?)
God once assumed on earth a human shape:
(Lo, I have spitten!) Dared I ask the grace,
Fain would I hear, of thy subtility,
From out what hole in man's corrupted heart
Creeps such a maggot: fancies verminous
Breed in the clots there, but a monster born
Of pride and folly like this pest — thyself
Only canst trace to egg-shell it hath chipped."

The sun rode high. "During our ignorance" —
Began Ferishtah — "folk esteemed as God
Yon orb: for argument, suppose him so, —
Be it the symbol, not the symbolized,
I and thou safelier take upon our lips.
Accordingly, yon orb that we adore
— What is he? Author of all light and life:
Such one must needs be somewhere: this is he.
Like what? If I may trust my human eyes,
A ball composed of spirit-fire, whence springs
— What, from this ball, my arms could circle round?
All I enjoy on earth. By consequence,
Inspiring me with — what? Why, love and praise.
I eat a palatable fig — there 's love
In little: who first planted what I pluck,
Obtains my little praise, too: more of both
Keeps due proportion with more cause for each:
So, more and ever more, till most of all
Completes experience, and the orb, descried
Ultimate giver of all good, perforce
Gathers unto himself all love, all praise,
Is worshipped — which means loved and praised at height.
Back to the first good: 't was the gardener gave
Occasion to my palate's pleasure: grace,
Plain on his part, demanded thanks on mine.
Go up above this giver, — step by step,
Gain a conception of what — (how and why,
Matters not now) — occasioned him to give,
Appointed him the gardener of the ground, —
I mount by just progression slow and sure
To some prime giver — here assumed yon orb —
Who takes my worship. Whom have I in mind,
Thus worshipping, unless a man, my like
Howe'er above me? Man, I say — how else,
I being man who worship? Here 's my hand
Lifts first a mustard-seed, then weight on weight

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Greater and ever greater, till at last
It lifts a melon, I suppose, then stops —
Hand-strength expended wholly: so, my love
First lauds the gardener for the fig his gift,
Then, looking higher, loves and lauds still more,
Who hires the ground, who owns the ground, Sheikh, Shah,
On and away, away and ever on,
Till, at the last, it loves and lauds the orb
Ultimate cause of all to laud and love.
Where is the break, the change of quality
In hand's power, soul's impulsion? Gift was grace,
The greatest as the smallest. Had I stopped
Anywhere in the scale, stayed love and praise
As so far only fit to follow gift,
Saying, 'I thanked the gardener for his fig,
But now that, lo, the Shah has filled my purse
With tomans which avail to purchase me
A figtree forest, shall I pay the same
With love and praise, the gardener's proper fee?'
Justly would whoso bears a brain object,
'Giving is giving, gift claims gift's return,
Do thou thine own part, therefore: let the Shah
Ask more from who has more to pay.' Perchance
He gave thee from his treasure less by much
Than the soil's servant: let that be! My part
Is plain — to meet and match the gift and gift
With love and love, with praise and praise, till both
Cry 'All of us is thine, we can no more!'
So shall I do man's utmost — man to man:
For as our liege the Shah's sublime estate
Merely enhaloes, leaves him man the same,
So must I count that orb I call a fire
(Keep to the language of our ignorance)
Something that 's fire and more beside: mere fire
— Is it a force which, giving, knows it gives,
And wherefore, so may look for love and praise
From me, fire's like so far, however less
In all beside? Prime cause this fire shall be,
Uncaused, all-causing: hence begin the gifts,
Thither must go my love and praise — to what?
Fire? Symbol fitly serves the symbolized
Herein, — that this same object of my thanks,
While to my mind nowise conceivable
Except as mind no less than fire, refutes
Next moment mind's conception: fire is fire —
While what I needs must thank, must needs include

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Purpose with power, — humanity like mine,
Imagined, for the dear necessity,
One moment in an object which the next
Confesses unimaginable. Power!
— What need of will, then? naught opposes power:
Why, purpose? any change must be for worse:
And what occasion for beneficence
When all that is, so is and so must be?
Best being best now, change were for the worse.
Accordingly discard these qualities
Proper to imperfection, take for type
Mere fire, eject the man, retain the orb, —
The perfect and, so, inconceivable, —
And what remains to love and praise? A stone
Fair-colored proves a solace to my eye,
Rolled by my tongue brings moisture curing drought,
And struck by steel emits a useful spark:
Shall I return it thanks, the insentient thing?
No, — man once, man forever — man in soul
As man in body: just as this can use
Its proper senses only, see and hear,
Taste, like or loathe according to its law
And not another creature's, — even so
Man's soul is moved by what, if it in turn
Must move, is kindred soul: receiving good
— Man's way — must make man's due acknowledgment,
No other, even while he reasons out
Plainly enough that, were the man unmanned,
Made angel of, angelic every way,
The love and praise that rightly seek and find
Their man-like object now, — instructed more,
Would go forth idly, air to emptiness.
Our human flower, sun-ripened, proffers scent
Though reason prove the sun lacks nose to feed
On what himself made grateful: flower and man,
Let each assume that scent and love alike
Being once born, must needs have use! Man's part
Is plain — to send love forth, — astray, perhaps:
No matter, he has done his part."

"Wherefrom
What is to follow — if I take thy sense —
But that the sun — the inconceivable
Confessed by man — comprises, all the same,
Man's every-day conception of himself —
No less remaining unconceived!"

"Agreed!"

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"Yet thou, insisting on the right of man
To feel as man, not otherwise, — man, bound
By man's conditions neither less nor more,
Obliged to estimate as fair or foul,
Right, wrong, good, evil, what man's faculty
Adjudges such, — how canst thou, — plainly bound
To take man's truth for truth and only truth, —
Dare to accept, in just one case, as truth
Falsehood confessed? Flesh simulating fire —
Our fellow-man whom we his fellows know
For dust — instinct with fire unknowable!
Where 's thy man-needed truth — its proof, nay print
Of faintest passage on the tablets traced
By man, termed knowledge? 'T is conceded thee,
We lack such fancied union — fire with flesh:
But even so, to lack is not to gain
Our lack's suppliance: where 's the trace of such
Recorded?"

"What if such a tracing were?
If some strange story stood, — whate'er its worth, —
That the immensely yearned-for, once befell,
— The sun was flesh once? — (keep the figure!)"

"How?
An union inconceivable was fact?"

"Son, if the stranger have convinced himself
Fancy is fact — the sun, besides a fire,
Holds earthly substance somehow fire pervades
And yet consumes not, — earth, he understands,
With essence he remains a stranger to, —
Fitlier thou saidst 'I stand appalled before
Conception unattainable by me
Who need it most' — than this — 'What? boast he holds
Conviction where I see conviction's need,
Alas, — and nothing else? then what remains
But that I straightway curse, cuff, kick the fool!'"

Fire is in the flint: true, once a spark escapes,
Fire forgets the kinship, soars till fancy shapes
Some befitting cradle where the babe had birth —
Wholly heaven's the product, unallied to earth.
Splendors recognized as perfect in the star! —
In our flint their home was, housed as now they are.

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VI. MIHRAB SHAH.

QUOTH an inquirer, "Praise the Merciful!
My thumb which yesterday a scorpion nipped —
(It swelled and blackened) — lo, is sound again!
By application of a virtuous root
The burning has abated: that is well.
But now methinks I have a mind to ask, —
Since this discomfort came of culling herbs
Nor meaning harm, — why needs a scorpion be?
Yea, there began, from when my thumb last throbbed,
Advance in question-framing, till I asked
Wherefore should any evil hap to man —
From ache of flesh to agony of soul —
Since God's All-mercy mates All-potency?
Nay, why permits He evil to Himself —
Man's sin, accounted such? Suppose a world
Purged of all pain, with fit inhabitant —
Man pure of evil in thought, word, and deed —
Were it not well? Then, wherefore otherwise?
Too good result? But He is wholly good!
Hard to effect? Ay, were He impotent!
Teach me, Ferishtah!"

Said the Dervish: "Friend,
My chance, escaped to-day, was worse than thine:
I, as I woke this morning, raised my head,
Which never tumbled but stuck fast on neck.
Was not I glad and thankful!"

"How could head
Tumble from neck, unchopped — inform me first!
Unless we take Firdausi's tale for truth,
Who ever heard the like?"

"The like might hap
By natural law: I let my staff fall thus —
It goes to ground, I know not why. Suppose,
Whene'er my hold was loosed, it skyward sprang
As certainly, and all experience proved
That, just as staves when unsupported sink,
So, unconfined, they soar?"

"Let such be law —
Why, a new chapter of sad accidents

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Were added to humanity's mischance,
No doubt at all, and as a man's false step
Now lays him prone on earth, contrariwise,
Removal from his shoulder of a weight
Might start him upwards to perdition. Ay!
But, since such law exists in just thy brain,
I shall not hesitate to doff my cap
For fear my head take flight."

"Nor feel relief
Finding it firm on shoulder. Tell me, now!
What were the bond 'twixt man and man, dost judge,
Pain once abolished? Come, be true! Our Shah —
How stands he in thy favor? Why that shrug?
Is not he lord and ruler?"

"Easily!
His mother bore him, first of those four wives
Provided by his father, such his luck:
Since when his business simply was to breathe
And take each day's new bounty. There he stands —
Where else had I stood, were his birth-star mine?
No, to respect men's power, I needs must see
Men's bare hands seek, find, grasp and wield the sword
Nobody else can brandish! Bless his heart,
'T is said, he scarcely counts his fingers right!"

Well, then — his princely doles! from every feast
Off go the feasted with the dish they ate
And cup they drank from, — nay, a change besides
Of garments" . . .

"Sir, put case, for service done, —
Or best, for love's sake, — such and such a slave
Sold his allowance of sour lentil-soup
To therewith purchase me a pipe-stick, — nay,
If he, by but one hour, cut short his sleep
To clout my shoe, — that were a sacrifice!"

"All praise his gracious bearing."

"All praise mine —
Or would praise did they never make approach
Except on all-fours, crawling till I bade,
'Now that with eyelids thou hast touched the earth,
Come close and have no fear, poor nothingness!'

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What wonder that the lady-rose I woo
And palisade about from every wind,
Holds herself handsomely? The wilding, now,
Ruffled outside at pleasure of the blast,
That still lifts up with something of a smile
Its poor attempt at bloom" . . .

"A blameless life,
Where wrong might revel with impunity —
Remember that!"

"The falcon on his fist —
Reclaimed and trained and belled and beautified
Till she believes herself the Simorgh's match —
She only deigns destroy the antelope,
Stoops at no carrion-crow: thou marvellest?"

"So be it, then! He wakes no love in thee
For any one of divers attributes
Commonly deemed love-worthy. All the same,
I would he were not wasting, slow but sure,
With that internal ulcer" . . .

"Say'st thou so?
How should I guess? Alack, poor soul! But stay —
Sure in the reach of art some remedy
Must lie to hand: or if it lurk, — that leech
Of fame in Tebriz, why not seek his aid?
Could'st not thou, Dervish, counsel in the case?"

"My counsel might be — what imports a pang
The more or less, which puts an end to one
Odious in spite of every attribute
Commonly deemed love-worthy?"

"Attributes?
Faugh! — nay, Ferishtah, — 't is an ulcer, think!
Attributes, quotha? Here 's poor flesh and blood,
Like thine and mine and every man's, a prey
To hell-fire! Hast thou lost thy wits for once?"

"Friend, here they are to find and profit by!
Put pain from out the world, what room were left
For thanks to God, for love to Man? Why thanks, —
Except for some escape, whate'er the style,
From pain that might be, name it as thou may'st?

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Why love, — when all thy kind, save me, suppose,
Thy father, and thy son, and . . . well, thy dog,
To eke the decent number out — we few
Who happen —like a handful of chance stars
From the unnumbered host — to shine o'erhead
And lend thee light, — our twinkle all thy store, —
We only take thy love! Mankind, forsooth?
Who sympathizes with their general joy
Foolish as undeserved? But pain — see God's
Wisdom at work! — man's heart is made to judge
Pain deserved nowhere by the common flesh
Our birthright, — bad and good deserve alike
No pain, to human apprehension! Lust,
Greed, cruelty, injustice crave (we hold)
Due punishment from somebody, no doubt:
But ulcer in the midriff! that brings flesh
Triumphant from the bar whereto arraigned
Soul quakes with reason. In the eye of God
Pain may have purpose and be justified:
Man's sense avails to only see, in pain,
A hateful chance no man but would avert,
Or, failing, needs must pity. Thanks to God
And love to man, — from man take these away,
And what is man worth? Therefore, Mihrab Shah,
Tax me my bread and salt twice over, claim
Laila my daughter for thy sport, — go on!
Slay my son's self, maintain thy poetry
Beats mine, — thou meritest a dozen deaths!
But — ulcer in the stomach, — ah, poor soul,
Try a fig-plaster: may it ease thy pangs!"

So, the head aches and the limbs are faint!
Flesh is a burden — even to you!
Can I force a smile with a fancy quaint?
Why are my ailments none or few?

In the soul of me sits sluggishness:
Body so strong and will so weak:
The slave stands fit for the labor — yes,
But the master's mandate is still to seek.

You, now — what if the outside clay
Helped, not hindered the inside flame?
My dim to-morrow — your plain to-day,
Yours the achievement, mine the aim?

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So were it rightly, so shall it be!
Only, while earth we pace together
For the purpose apportioned you and me,
Closer we tread for a common tether.

You shall sigh, "Wait for his sluggish soul!
Shame he should lag, not lamed as I!"
May not I smile, "Ungained her goal:
Body may reach her — by and by"?

VII. A CAMEL-DRIVER.

"How of his fate, the Pilgrims' soldier-guide
Condemned" (Ferishtah questioned), "for he slew
The merchant whom he convoyed with his bales
— A special treachery?"
"Sir, the proofs were plain:
Justice was satisfied: between two boards
The rogue was sawn asunder, rightly served."

"With all wise men's approval — mine at least."

"Himself, indeed, confessed as much. 'I die
Justly' (groaned he) 'through over-greediness
Which tempted me to rob: but grieve the most
That he who quickened sin at slumber, — ay,
Prompted and pestered me till thought grew deed, —
The same is fled to Syria and is safe,
Laughing at me thus left to pay for both.
My comfort is that God reserves for him
Hell's hottest'" . . .
"Idle words."
"Enlighten me!
Wherefore so idle? Punishment by man
Has thy assent, — the word is on thy lips.
By parity of reason, punishment
By God should likelier win thy thanks and praise."

"Man acts as man must: God, as God beseems.
A camel-driver, when his beast will bite,
Thumps her athwart the muzzle: why?"
"How else
Instruct the creature — mouths should munch not bite?"

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"True, he is man, knows but man's trick to teach.
Suppose some plain word, told her first of all,
Had hindered any biting?"
"Find him such,
And fit the beast with understanding first!
No understanding animals like Rakhsh
Nowadays, Master! Till they breed on earth,
For teaching — blows must serve."
"Who deals the blow —
What if by some rare method, — magic, say, —
He saw into the biter's very soul,
And knew the fault was so repented of
It could not happen twice?"
"That's something: still,
I hear, methinks, the driver say, 'No less
Take thy fault's due! Those long-necked sisters, see,
Lean all a-stretch to know if biting meets
Punishment or enjoys impunity.
For their sakes — thwack!'"
"The journey home at end,
The solitary beast safe-stabled now,
In comes the driver to avenge a wrong
Suffered from six months since, — apparently
With patience, nay, approval: when the jaws
Met i' the small o' the arm. 'Ha, Ladykin,
Still at thy frolics, girl of gold?' laughed he:
'Eat flesh? Rye-grass content thee rather with,
Whereof accept a bundle!' Now, — what change!
Laughter by no means! Now 't is, 'Fiend, thy frisk
Was fit to find thee provender, didst judge?
Behold this red-hot twy-prong, thus I stick
To hiss i' the soft of thee!'"
"Behold? behold
A crazy noddle, rather! Sure the brute
Might wellnigh have plain speech coaxed out of tongue,
And grow as voluble as Rakhsh himself
At such mad outrage. 'Could I take thy mind,
Guess thy desire? If biting was offence,
Wherefore the rye-grass bundle, why each day's
Patting and petting, but to intimate
My playsomeness had pleased thee? Thou endowed
With reason, truly!'"
"Reason aims to raise
Some makeshift scaffold-vantage midway, whence
Man dares, for life's brief moment, peer below:
But ape omniscience? Nay! The ladder lent

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To climb by, step and step, until we reach
The little foothold-rise allowed mankind
To mount on and thence guess the sun's survey —
Shall this avail to show us world-wide truth
Stretched for the sun's descrying? Reason bids,
'Teach, Man, thy beast his duty first of all
Or last of all, with blows if blows must be, —
How else accomplish teaching?' Reason adds,
'Before man's First, and after man's poor Last,
God operated and will operate.'
— Process of which man merely knows this much, —
That nowise it resembles man's at all,
Teaching or punishing."
"It follows, then,
That any malefactor I would smite
With God's allowance, God himself will spare
Presumably. No scapegrace? Then, rejoice
Thou snatch-grace safe in Syria!"
"Friend, such view
Is but man's wonderful and wide mistake.
Man lumps his kind i' the mass: God singles thence
Unit by unit. Thou and God exist —
So think! — for certain: think the mass — mankind —
Disparts, disperses, leaves thyself alone!
Ask thy lone soul what laws are plain to thee, —
Thee and no other, — stand or fall by them!
That is the part for thee: regard all else
For what it may be — Time's illusion. This
Be sure of — ignorance that sins, is safe.
No punishment like knowledge! Instance, now!
My father's choicest treasure was a book
Wherein he, day by day and year by year,
Recorded gains of wisdom for my sake
When I should grow to manhood. While a child,
Coming upon the casket where it lay
Unguarded, — what did I but toss the thing
Into a fire to make more flame therewith,
Meaning no harm? So acts man three-years old!
I grieve now at my loss by witlessness,
But guilt was none to punish. Man mature —
Each word of his I lightly held, each look
I turned from — wish that wished in vain — nay, will
That willed and yet went all to waste — 't is these
Rankle like fire. Forgiveness? rather grant
Forgetfulness! The past is past and lost.
However near I stand in his regard,

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So much the nearer had I stood by steps
Offered the feet which rashly spurned their help.
That I call Hell; why further punishment?"

When I vexed you and you chid me,
And I owned my fault and turned
My cheek the way you bid me,
And confessed the blow well earned, —

My comfort all the while was
— Fault was faulty — near, not quite!
Do you wonder why the smile was?
O'erpunished wrong grew right.

But faults you ne'er suspected,
Nay, praised, no faults at all, —
Those would you had detected —
Crushed eggs whence snakes could crawl!

VIII. TWO CAMELS.

QUOTH one: "Sir, solve a scruple! No true sage
I hear of, but instructs his scholar thus:
'Would'st thou be wise? Then mortify thyself!
Balk of its craving every bestial sense!
Say, "If I relish melons — so do swine!
Horse, ass, and mule consume their provender
Nor leave a pea-pod: fasting feeds the soul."'
Thus they admonish: while thyself, I note,
Eatest thy ration with an appetite,
Nor fallest foul of whoso licks his lips
And sighs — 'Well-saffroned was that barley-soup!'
Can wisdom coexist with — gorge-and-swill,
I say not, — simply sensual preference
For this or that fantastic meat and drink?
Moreover, wind blows sharper than its wont
This morning, and thou hast already donned
Thy sheepskin over-garment: sure the sage
Is busied with conceits that soar above
A petty change of season and its chance
Of causing ordinary flesh to sneeze?
I always thought, Sir" . . .
"Son," Ferishtah said,
"Truth ought to seem as never thought before.
How if I give it birth in parable?

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A neighbor owns two camels, beasts of price
And promise, destined each to go, next week,
Swiftly and surely with his merchandise
From Nishapur to Sebzevar, no truce
To tramp, but travel, spite of sands and drought,
In days so many, lest they miss the Fair.
Each falls to meditation o'er his crib
Piled high with provender before the start.
Quoth this: 'My soul is set on winning praise
From goodman lord and master, — hump to hoof,
I dedicate me to his service. How?
Grass, purslane, lupines, and I know not what,
Crammed in my manger? Ha, I see — I see!
No, master, spare thy money! I shall trudge
The distance and yet cost thee not a doit
Beyond my supper on this mouldy bran.'
'Be magnified, O master, for the meal
So opportunely liberal!' quoth that.
'What use of strength in me but to surmount
Sands and simooms, and bend beneath thy bales
No knee until I reach the glad bazaar?
Thus I do justice to thy fare: no sprig
Of toothsome chervil must I leave unchewed!
Too bitterly should I reproach myself
Did I sink down in sight of Sebzevar,
Remembering how the merest mouthful more
Had heartened me to manage yet a mile!'
And so it proved: the too-abstemious brute
Midway broke down, his pack rejoiced the thieves,
His carcass fed the vultures: not so he
The wisely thankful, who, good market-drudge,
Let down his lading in the market-place,
No damage to a single pack. Which beast,
Think ye, had praise and patting and a brand
Of good-and-faithful-servant fixed on flank?
So, with thy squeamish scruple. What imports
Fasting or feasting? Do thy day's work, dare
Refuse no help thereto, since help refused
Is hindrance sought and found. Win but the race —
Who shall object 'He tossed three wine-cups off,
And, just at starting, Lilith kissed his lips'?

"More soberly, — consider this, my Son!
Put case I never have myself enjoyed,
Known by experience what enjoyment means,
How shall I — share enjoyment? — no, indeed! —

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Supply it to my fellows, — ignorant,
As so I should be of the thing they crave,
How it affects them, works for good or ill.
Style my enjoyment self-indulgence — sin —
Why should I labor to infect my kind
With sin's occasion, bid them too enjoy,
Who else might neither catch nor give again
Joy's plague, but live in righteous misery?
Just as I cannot, till myself convinced,
Impart conviction, so, to deal forth joy
Adroitly, needs must I know joy myself.
Renounce joy for my fellows' sake? That's joy
Beyond joy; but renounced for mine, not theirs?
Why, the physician called to help the sick,
Cries 'Let me, first of all, discard my health!'
No, Son: the richness hearted in such joy
Is in the knowing what are gifts we give,
Not in a vain endeavor not to know!
Therefore, desire joy and thank God for it!
The Adversary said, — a Jew reports, —
חנם יראה איוב אלהים׃
In Persian phrase, 'Does Job fear God for naught?'
Job's creatureship is not abjured, thou fool!
He nowise isolates himself and plays
The independent equal, owns no more
Than himself gave himself, so why thank God?
A proper speech were this מאלהים
'Equals we are, Job, labor for thyself,
Nor bid me help thee: bear, as best flesh may,
Pains I inflict not nor avail to cure:
Beg of me nothing thou thyself may'st win
By work, or waive with magnanimity,
Since we are peers acknowledged, — scarcely peers,
Had I implanted any want of thine
Only my power could meet and gratify.'
No: rather hear, at man's indifference —
'Wherefore did I contrive for thee that ear
Hungry for music, and direct thine eye
To where I hold a seven-stringed instrument,
Unless I meant thee to beseech me play?'"

Once I saw a chemist take a pinch of powder
— Simple dust it seemed — and half-unstop a phial:
— Out dropped harmless dew. "Mixed nothings make" (quoth h
"Something!" So they did: a thunderclap, but louder —
Lightning-flash, but fiercer — put spectators' nerves to trial:
Sure enough, we learned what was, imagined what might be.

Had I no experience how a lip's mere tremble,
Look's half hesitation, cheek's just change of color,
These effect a heartquake, — how should I conceive
What a heaven there may be? Let it but resemble
Earth myself have known! No bliss that 's finer, fuller,
Only — bliss that lasts, they say, and fain would I believe.

IX. CHERRIES.

"WHAT, I disturb thee at thy morning-meal:
Cherries so ripe already? Eat apace!
I recollect thy lesson yesterday.
Yet — thanks, Sir, for thy leave to interrupt" . . .

"Friend, I have finished my repast, thank God!"

"There now, thy thanks for breaking fast on fruit! —
Thanks being praise, or tantamount thereto.
Prithee consider, have not things degree,
Lofty and low? Are things not great and small,
Thence claiming praise and wonder more or less?
Shall we confuse them, with thy warrant too,
Whose doctrine otherwise begins and ends
With just this precept, 'Never faith enough
In man as weakness, God as potency'?
When I would pay soul's tribute to that same,
Why not look up in wonder, bid the stars
Attest my praise of the All-mighty One?
What are man's puny members and as mean
Requirements weighed with Star-King Mushtari?
There is the marvel!"
"Not to man — that 's me.
List to what happened late, in fact or dream.
A certain stranger, bound from far away,
Still the Shah's subject, found himself before
Ispahan palace-gate. As duty bade,
He enters in the courts, will, if he may,
See so much glory as befits a slave
Who only comes, of mind to testify
How great and good is shown our lord the Shah.
In he walks, round he casts his eye about,
Looks up and down, admires to heart's content,
Ascends the gallery, tries door and door,
None says his reverence nay: peeps in at each,
Wonders at all the unimagined use,

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Gold here and jewels there, — so vast, that hall —
So perfect yon pavilion! — lamps above
Bidding look up from luxuries below, —
Evermore wonder topping wonder, — last —
Sudden he comes upon a cosy nook,
A nest-like little chamber, with his name,
His own, yea, his and no mistake at all,
Plain o'er the entry, — what, and he descries
Just those arrangements inside, — oh, the care! —
Suited to soul and body both, — so snug
The cushion — nay, the pipe-stand furnished so!
Whereat he cries aloud, — what think'st thou, Friend?
'That these my slippers should be just my choice,
Even to the color that I most affect,
Is nothing: ah, that lamp, the central sun,
What must it light within its minaret
I scarce dare guess the good of! Who lives there?
That let me wonder at, — no slipper toys
Meant for the foot, forsooth, which kicks them — thus!'
Never enough faith in omnipotence, —
Never too much, by parity, of faith
In impuissance, man's — which turns to strength
When once acknowledged weakness every way.
How? Hear the teaching of another tale.

"Two men once owed the Shah a mighty sum,
Beggars they both were: this one crossed his arms
And bowed his head, — 'whereof,' sighed he, 'each hair
Proved it a jewel, how the host's amount
Were idly strewn for payment at thy feet!'
'Lord, here they lie, my havings poor and scant!
All of the berries on my currant-bush,
What roots of garlic have escaped the mice,
And some five pippins from the seedling tree, —
Would they were half-a-dozen! Anyhow,
Accept my all, poor beggar that I am!'
'Received in full of all demands!' smiled back
The apportioner of every lot of ground
From inch to acre. Littleness of love
Befits the littleness of loving thing.
What if he boasted 'Seeing I am great,
Great must my corresponding tribute be'?
Mushtari, — well, suppose him seven times seven
The sun's superior, proved so by some sage:
Am I that sage? To me his twinkle blue
Is all I know of him and thank him for,

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And therefore I have put the same in verse —
'Like yon blue twinkle, twinks thine eye, my Love!'
Neither shalt thou be troubled overmuch
Because thy offering — littleness itself —
Is lessened by admixture sad and strange
Of mere man's-motives, — praise with fear, and love
With looking after that same love's reward.
Alas, Friend, what was free from this alloy, —
Some smatch thereof, — in best and purest love
Proffered thy earthly father? Dust thou art,
Dust shalt be to the end. Thy father took
The dust, and kindly called the handful — gold,
Nor cared to count what sparkled here and there,
Sagely unanalytic. Thank, praise, love
(Sum up thus) for the lowest favors first,
The commonest of comforts! aught beside
Very omnipotence had overlooked
Such needs, arranging for thy little life.
Nor waste thy power of love in wonderment
At what thou wiselier lettest shine unsoiled
By breath of word. That this last cherry soothes
A roughness of my palate, that I know:
His Maker knows why Mushtari was made."

Verse-making was least of my virtues: I viewed with despair
Wealth that never yet was but might be — all that verse-making were
If the life would but lengthen to wish, let the mind be laid bare.
So I said "To do little is bad, to do nothing is worse" —
And made verse.

Love-making, — how simple a matter! No depths to explore,
No heights in a life to ascend! No disheartening Before,
No affrighting Hereafter, — love now will be love evermore.
So I felt "To keep silence were folly:" — all language above,
I made love.

X. PLOT-CULTURE.

"Ay, but, Ferishtah," — a disciple smirked, —
"That verse of thine 'How twinks thine eye, my Love,
Blue as yon star-beam!' much arrides myself
Who haply may obtain a kiss therewith
This eve from Laila where the palms abound —

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My youth, my warrant — so the palms be close!
Suppose when thou art earnest in discourse
Concerning high and holy things, — abrupt
I out with — 'Laila's lip, how honey-sweet!' —
What say'st thou, were it scandalous or no?
I feel thy shoe sent flying at my mouth
For daring — prodigy of impudence —
Publish what, secret, were permissible.
Well, — one slide further in the imagined slough, —
Knee-deep therein, (respect thy reverence!) —
Suppose me well aware thy very self
Stooped prying through the palm-screen, while I dared
Solace me with caressings all the same?
Unutterable, nay — unthinkable,
Undreamable a deed of shame! Alack,
How will it fare should'st thou impress on me
That certainly an Eye is over all
And each, to mark the minute's deed, word, thought,
As worthy of reward or punishment?
Shall I permit my sense an Eye-viewed shame,
Broad daylight perpetration, — so to speak, —
I had not dared to breathe within the Ear,
With black night's help about me? Yet I stand
A man, no monster, made of flesh not cloud:
Why made so, if my making prove offence
To Maker's eye and ear?"
"Thou would'st not stand
Distinctly Man," — Ferishtah made reply,
"Not the mere creature, — did no limit-line
Round thee about, apportion thee thy place
Clean-cut from out and off the illimitable, —
Minuteness severed from immensity.
All of thee for the Maker, — for thyself,
Workings inside the circle that evolve
Thine all, — the product of thy cultured plot.
So much of grain the ground's lord bids thee yield:
Bring sacks to granary in Autumn! spare
Daily intelligence of this manure,
That compost, how they tend to feed the soil:
There thou art master sole and absolute
— Only, remember doomsday! Twit'st thou me
Because I turn away my outraged nose
Should'st thou obtrude thereon a shovelful
Of fertilizing kisses? Since thy sire
Wills and obtains thy marriage with the maid,
Enough! Be reticent, I counsel thee,

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Nor venture to acquaint him, point by point,
What he procures thee. Is he so obtuse?
Keep thy instruction to thyself! My ass —
Only from him expect acknowledgment,
The while he champs my gift, a thistle-bunch,
How much he loves the largess: of his love
I only tolerate so much as tells
By wrinkling nose and inarticulate grunt,
The meal, that heartens him to do my work,
Tickles his palate as I meant it should."

Not with my Soul, Love! — bid no Soul like mine
Lap thee around nor leave the poor Sense room!
Soul, — travel-worn, toil-weary, — would confine
Along with Soul, Soul's gains from glow and gloom,
Captures from soarings high and divings deep.
Spoil-laden Soul, how should such memories sleep?
Take Sense, too — let me love entire and whole —
Not with my Soul!

Eyes shall meet eyes and find no eyes between,
Lips feed on lips, no other lips to fear!
No past, no future — so thine arms but screen
The present from surprise! not there, 't is here —
Not then, 't is now: — back, memories that intrude!
Make, Love, the universe our solitude,
And, over all the rest, oblivion roll —
Sense quenching Soul!

XI. A PILLAR AT SEBZEVAR.

"KNOWLEDGE deposed, then!" — groaned whom that most grieved
As foolishest of all the company.
"What, knowledge, man's distinctive attribute,
He doffs that crown to emulate an ass
Because the unknowing long-ears loves at least
Husked lupines, and belike the feeder's self
— Whose purpose in the dole what ass divines?"

"Friend," quoth Ferishtah, "all I seem to know
Is — I know nothing save that love I can
Boundlessly, endlessly. My curls were crowned
In youth with knowledge, — off, alas, crown slipped
Next moment, pushed by better knowledge still

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Which nowise proved more constant: gain, to-day,
Was toppling loss to-morrow, lay at last
— Knowledge, the golden? — lacquered ignorance!
As gain — mistrust it! Not as means to gain:
Lacquer we learn by: cast in fining-pot,
We learn, when what seemed ore assayed proves dross, —
Surelier true gold's worth, guess how purity
I' the lode were precious could one light on ore
Clarified up to test of crucible.
The prize is in the process: knowledge means
Ever-renewed assurance by defeat
That victory is somehow still to reach,
But love is victory, the prize itself:
Love — trust to! Be rewarded for the trust
In trust's mere act. In love success is sure,
Attainment — no delusion, whatsoe'er
The prize be: apprehended as a prize,
A prize it is. Thy child as surely grasps
An orange as he fails to grasp the sun
Assumed his capture. What if soon he finds
The foolish fruit unworthy grasping? Joy
In shape and color, — that was joy as true —
Worthy in its degree of love — as grasp
Of sun were, which had singed his hand beside.
What if he said the orange held no juice
Since it was not that sun he hoped to suck?
This constitutes the curse that spoils our life
And sets man maundering of his misery,
That there 's no meanest atom he obtains
Of what he counts for knowledge but he cries
'Hold here, — I have the whole thing, — know, this time,
Nor need search farther!' Whereas, strew his path
With pleasures, and he scorns them while he stoops:
'This fitly call'st thou pleasure, pick up this
And praise it, truly? I reserve my thanks
For something more substantial.' Fool not thus
In practising with life and its delights!
Enjoy the present gift, nor wait to know
The unknowable. Enough to say 'I feel
Love's sure effect, and, being loved, must love
The love its cause behind, — I can and do!'
Nor turn to try thy brain-power on the fact,
(Apart from as it strikes thee, here and now —
Its how and why, i' the future and elsewhere)
Except to — yet once more, and ever again,
Confirm thee in thy utter ignorance:

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Assured that, whatsoe'er the quality
Of love's cause, save that love was caused thereby,
This — nigh upon revealment as it seemed
A minute since — defies thy longing looks,
Withdrawn into the unknowable once more.
Wholly distrust thy knowledge, then, and trust
As wholly love allied to ignorance!
There lies thy truth and safety. Love is praise,
And praise is love! Refine the same, contrive
An intellectual tribute — ignorance
Appreciating ere approbative
Of knowledge that is infinite? With us,
The small, who thank the knowledge of our kind
Greater than we, the wiser ignorance
Restricts its apprehension, sees and knows
No more than brain accepts in faith of sight,
Takes first what comes first, only sure so far.
By Sebzevar a certain pillar stands
So aptly that its gnomon tells the hour;
What if the townsmen said 'Before we thank
Who placed it, for his serviceable craft,
And go to dinner since its shade tells noon,
Needs must we have the craftsman's purpose clear
On half a hundred more recondite points
Than a mere summons to a vulgar meal!'
Better they say 'How opportune the help!
Be loved and praised, thou kindly-hearted sage
Whom Hudhud taught, — the gracious spirit-bird, —
How to construct the pillar, teach the time!'
So let us say — not 'Since we know, we love,'
But rather 'Since we love, we know enough.'
Perhaps the pillar by a spell controlled
Mushtari in his courses? Added grace
Surely I count it that the sage devised,
Beside celestial service, ministry
To all the land, by one sharp shade at noon
Falling as folk foresee. Once more, then, Friend —
(What ever in those careless ears of thine
Withal I needs must round thee) — knowledge doubt
Even wherein it seems demonstrable!
Love, — in the claim for love, that 's gratitude
For apprehended pleasure, nowise doubt!
Pay its due tribute, — sure that pleasure is,
While knowledge may be, at the most. See, now!
Eating my breakfast, I thanked God. — 'For love
Shown in the cherries' flavor? Consecrate

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So petty an example?' There 's the fault!
We circumscribe omnipotence. Search sand
To unearth water: if first handful scooped
Yields thee a draught, what need of digging down
Full fifty fathoms deep to find a spring
Whereof the pulse might deluge half the land?
Drain the sufficient drop, and praise what checks
The drought that glues thy tongue, — what more would help
A brimful cistern? Ask the cistern's boon
When thou would'st solace camels: in thy case,
Relish the drop and love the lovable!"

"And what may be unlovable?"

"Why, hate!
If out of sand comes sand and naught but sand,
Affect not to be quaffing at mirage,
Nor nickname pain as pleasure. That, belike,
Constitutes just the trial of thy wit
And worthiness to gain promotion, — hence,
Proves the true purpose of thine actual life.
Thy soul's environment of things perceived,
Things visible and things invisible,
Fact, fancy — all was purposed to evolve
This and this only — was thy wit of worth
To recognize the drop's use, love the same,
And loyally declare against mirage
Though all the world asseverated dust
Was good to drink? Say, 'what made moist my lip,
That I acknowledged moisture:' thou art saved!
For why? The creature and creator stand
Rightly related so. Consider well!
Were knowledge all thy faculty, then God
Must be ignored: love gains him by first leap.
Frankly accept the creatureship: ask good
To love for: press bold to the tether's end
Allotted to this life's intelligence!
'So we offend?' Will it offend thyself
If — impuissance praying potency —
Thy child beseech that thou command the sun
Rise bright to-morrow — thou, he thinks supreme
In power and goodness, why should'st thou refuse?
Afterward, when the child matures, perchance
The fault were greater if, with wit full-grown,
The stripling dared to ask for a dinar,
Than that the boy cried 'Pluck Sitara down

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And give her me to play with!' 'T is for him
To have no bounds to his belief in thee:
For thee it also is to let her shine
Lustrous and lonely, so best serving him!"

Ask not one least word of praise!
Words declare your eyes are bright?
What then meant that summer day's
Silence spent in one long gaze?
Was my silence wrong or right?

Words of praise were all to seek!
Face of you and form of you,
Did they find the praise so weak
When my lips just touched your cheek —
Touch which let my soul come through?

XII. A BEAN-STRIPE: ALSO APPLE-EATING.

"Look, I strew beans" . . .
(Ferishtah, we premise,
Strove this way with a scholar's cavilment
Who put the peevish question: "Sir, be frank!
A good thing or a bad thing — Life is which?
Shine and shade, happiness and misery
Battle it out there: which force beats, I ask?
If I pick beans from out a bushelful —
This one, this other, — then demand of thee
What color names each justly in the main, —
'Black' I expect, and 'White' ensues reply:
No hesitation for what speck, spot, splash
Of either color's opposite, intrudes
To modify thy judgment. Well, for beans
Substitute days, — show, ranged in order, Life —
Then, tell me its true color! Time is short,
Life's days compose a span, — as brief be speech!
Black I pronounce for, like the Indian Sage, —
Black — present, past, and future, interspersed
With blanks, no doubt, which simple folk style Good
Because not Evil: no, indeed? Forsooth,
Black's shade on White is White too! What 's the worst
Of Evil but that, past, it overshades
The else-exempted present? — memory,

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We call the plague! 'Nay, but our memory fades
And leaves the past unsullied!' Does it so?
Why, straight the purpose of such breathing-space,
Such respite from past ill, grows plain enough!
What follows on remembrance of the past?
Fear of the future! Life, from birth to death,
Means — either looking back on harm escaped,
Or looking forward to that harm's return
With tenfold power of harming. Black, not White,
Never the whole consummate quietude
Life should be, troubled by no fear! — nor hope —
I 'll say, since lamplight dies in noontide, hope
Loses itself in certainty. Such lot
Man's might have been: I leave the consequence
To bolder critics of the Primal Cause;
Such am not I: but, man — as man I speak:
Black is the bean-throw: evil is the Life!")

"Look, I strew beans," — resumed Ferishtah, — "beans
Blackish and whitish; what they figure forth
Shall be man's sum of moments, bad and good,
That make up Life, — each moment when he feels
Pleasure or pain, his poorest fact of sense,
Consciousness anyhow: there 's stand the first;
Whence next advance shall be from points to line,
Singulars to a series, parts to whole,
And moments to the Life. How look they now,
Viewed in the large, those little joys and griefs
Ranged duly all a-row at last, like beans
— These which I strew? This bean was white, this — black,
Set by itself, — but see if, good and bad
Each following either in companionship,
Black have not grown less black and white less white,
Till blackish seems but dun, and whitish — gray,
And the whole line turns — well, or black to thee
Or white belike to me — no matter which:
The main result is — both are modified
According to our eye's scope, power of range
Before and after. Black dost call this bean?
What, with a whiteness in its wake, which — see —
Suffuses half its neighbor? — and, in turn,
Lowers its pearliness late absolute,
Frowned upon by the jet which follows hard —
Else wholly white my bean were. Choose a joy!
Bettered it was by sorrow gone before,
And sobered somewhat by the shadowy sense

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Of sorrow which came after or might come.
Joy, sorrow, — by precedence, subsequence —
Either on each, make fusion, mix in Life
That 's both and neither wholly: gray or dun?
Dun thou decidest? gray prevails, say I:
Wherefore? Because my view is wide enough,
Reaches from first to last nor winks at all:
Motion achieves it: stop short — fast we stick, —
Probably at the bean that 's blackest.
Since —
Son, trust me, — this I know and only this —
I am in motion, and all things beside
That circle round my passage through their midst, —
Motionless, these are, as regarding me:
— Which means, myself I solely recognize.
They too may recognize themselves, not me,
For aught I know or care: but plain they serve
This, if no other purpose — stuff to try
And test my power upon of raying light
And lending hue to all things as I go
Moonlike through vapor. Mark the flying orb!
Think'st thou the halo, painted still afresh
At each new cloud-fleece pierced and passaged through,
This was and is and will be evermore
Colored in permanence? The glory swims
Girdling the glory-giver, swallowed straight
By night's abysmal gloom, unglorified
Behind as erst before the advancer: gloom?
Faced by the onward-faring, see, succeeds
From the abandoned heaven a next surprise,
And where 's the gloom now? — silver-smitten straight,
One glow and variegation! So with me,
Who move and make — myself — the black, the white,
The good, the bad, of life's environment.
Stand still! black stays black: start again! there 's white
Asserts supremacy: the motion 's all
That colors me my moment: seen as joy? —
I have escaped from sorrow, or that was
Or might have been: as sorrow? — thence shall be
Escape as certain: white preceded black,
Black shall give way to white as duly, — so,
Deepest in black means white most imminent.
Stand still, — have no before, no after! — life
Proves death, existence grows impossible
To man like me. 'What else is blessed sleep
But death, then? Why, a rapture of release

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From toil, — that 's sleep's approach: as certainly,
The end of sleep means, toil is triumphed o'er:
These round the blank inconsciousness between
Brightness and brightness, either pushed to blaze
Just through that blank's interposition. Hence
The use of things external: man — that 's I —
Practise thereon my power of casting light,
And calling substance, — when the light I cast
Breaks into color, — by its proper name
— A truth and yet a falsity: black, white,
Names each bean taken from what lay so close
And threw such tint: pain might mean pain indeed
Seen in the passage past it, — pleasure prove
No mere delusion while I paused to look, —
Though what an idle fancy was that fear
Which overhung and hindered pleasure's hue!
While how, again, pain's shade enhanced the shine
Of pleasure, else no pleasure! Such effects
Came of such causes. Passage at an end, —
Past, present, future pains and pleasures fused
So that one glance may gather blacks and whites
Into a lifetime, — like my bean-streak there,
Why, white they whirl into, not black — for me!"

"Ay, but for me? The indubitable blacks,
Immeasurable miseries, here, there
And everywhere i' the world — world outside thine
Paled off so opportunely, — body's plague,
Torment of soul, — where 's found thy fellowship
With wide humanity all round about
Reeling beneath its burden? What 's despair?
Behold that man, that woman, child — nay, brute!
Will any speck of white unblacken life
Splashed, splotched, dyed hell-deep now from end to end
For him or her or it — who knows? Not I!"

"Nor I, Son! 'It' shall stand for bird, beast, fish,
Reptile, and insect even: take the last!
There 's the palm-aphis, minute miracle
As wondrous every whit as thou or I:
Well, and his world 's the palm-frond, there he 's born,
Lives, breeds, and dies in that circumference,
An inch of green for cradle, pasture-ground,
Purlieu and grave: the palm's use, ask of him!
'To furnish these,' replies his wit: ask thine —
Who see the heaven above, the earth below,

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Creation everywhere, — these, each and all
Claim certain recognition from the tree
For special service rendered branch and bole,
Top-tuft and tap-root: — for thyself, thus seen,
Palms furnish dates to eat, and leaves to shade,
— Maybe, thatch huts with, — have another use
Than strikes the aphis. So with me, my Son!
I know my own appointed patch i' the world,
What pleasures me or pains there: all outside —
How he, she, it, and even thou, Son, live,
Are pleased or pained, is past conjecture, once
I pry beneath the semblance, — all that 's fit,
To practise with, — reach where the fact may lie
Fathom-deep lower. There 's the first and last
Of my philosophy. Blacks blur thy white?
Not mine! The aphis feeds, nor finds his leaf
Untenable, because a lance-thrust, nay,
Lightning strikes sere a moss-patch close beside,
Where certain other aphids live and love.
Restriction to his single inch of white,
That 's law for him, the aphis: but for me,
The man, the larger-souled, beside my stretch
Of blacks and whites, I see a world of woe
All round about me: one such burst of black
Intolerable o'er the life I count
White in the main, and, yea — white's faintest trace
Were clean abolished once and evermore.
Thus fare my fellows, swallowed up in gloom
So far as I discern: how far is that?
God's care be God's! 'T is mine — to boast no joy
Unsobered by such sorrows of my kind
As sully with their shade my life that shines."

"Reflected possibilities of pain,
Forsooth, just chasten pleasure! Pain itself, —
Fact and not fancy, does not this affect
The general color?"

"Here and there a touch
Taught me, betimes, the artifice of things —
That all about, external to myself,
Was meant to be suspected, — not revealed
Demonstrably a cheat, — but half seen through,
Lest white should rule unchecked along the line
Therefore white may not triumph. All the same,
Of absolute and irretrievable

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And all-subduing black, — black's soul of black
Beyond white's power to disintensify, —
Of that I saw no sample: such may wreck
My life and ruin my philosophy
To-morrow, doubtless: hence the constant shade
Cast on life's shine, — the tremor that intrudes
When firmest seems my faith in white. Dost ask
'Who is Ferishtah, hitherto exempt
From black experience? Why, if God be just,
Were sundry fellow-mortals singled out
To undergo experience for his sake,
Just that the gift of pain, bestowed on them,
In him might temper to the due degree
Joy's else-excessive largess?' Why, indeed!
Back are we brought thus to the starting-point —
Man's impotency, God's omnipotence,
These stop my answer. Aphis that I am,
How leave my inch-allotment, pass at will
Into my fellow's liberty of range,
Enter into his sense of black and white,
As either, seen by me from outside, seems
Predominatingly the color? Life,
Lived by my fellow, shall I pass into
And myself live there? No — no more than pass
From Persia, where in sun since birth I bask
Daily, to some ungracious land afar,
Told of by travellers, where the might of snow
Smothers up day, and fluids lose themselves
Frozen to marble. How I bear the sun,
Beat though he may unduly, that I know:
How blood once curdled ever creeps again,
Baffles conjecture: yet since people live
Somehow, resist a clime would conquer me,
Somehow provided for their sake must dawn
Compensative resource. 'No sun, no grapes, —
Then, no subsistence!' — were it wisely said?
Or this well-reasoned — 'Do I dare feel warmth
And please my palate here with Persia's vine,
Though, over-mounts, — to trust the traveller, —
Snow, feather-thick, is falling while I feast?
What if the cruel winter force his way
Here also?' Son, the wise reply were this:
When cold from over-mounts spikes through and through
Blood, bone and marrow of Ferishtah, — then,
Time to look out for shelter — time, at least,
To wring the hands and cry 'No shelter serves!'

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Shelter, of some sort, no experienced chill
Warrants that I despair to find."

"No less,
Doctors have differed here; thou say'st thy say;
Another man's experience masters thine,
Flat controverted by the sourly-Sage,
The Indian witness who, with faculty
Fine as Ferishtah's, found no white at all
Chequer the world's predominating black,
No good oust evil from supremacy,
So that Life's best was that it led to death.
How of his testimony?"

"Son, suppose
My camel told me: 'Threescore days and ten
I traversed hill and dale yet never found
Food to stop hunger, drink to stay my drought;
Yet, here I stand alive, which take in proof
That to survive was found impossible!'
'Nay, rather take thou, non-surviving beast,'
(Reply were prompt,) 'on flank this thwack of staff
Nowise affecting flesh that 's dead and dry!
Thou wincest? Take correction twice, amend
Next time thy nomenclature! Call white — white!'
The sourly-Sage, for whom life's best was death,
Lived out his seventy years, looked hale, laughed loud,
Liked — above all — his dinner, — lied, in short."

"Lied is a rough phrase: say he fell from truth
In climbing towards it! — sure less faulty so
Than had he sat him down and stayed content
With thy safe orthodoxy, 'White, all white,
White everywhere for certain I should see
Did I but understand how white is black,
As clearer sense than mine would.' Clearer sense, —
Whose may that be? Mere human eyes I boast,
And such distinguish colors in the main,
However any tongue, that 's human too,
Please to report the matter. Dost thou blame
A soul that strives but to see plain, speak true,
Truth at all hazards? Oh, this false for real,
This emptiness which feigns solidity, —
Ever some gray that 's white and dun that 's black, —
When shall we rest upon the thing itself
Not on its semblance? — Soul — too weak, forsooth,

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To cope with fact — wants fiction everywhere!
Mine tires of falsehood: truth at any cost!"

"Take one and try conclusions — this, suppose!
God is all-good, all-wise, all-powerful: truth?
Take it and rest there. What is man? Not God:
None of these absolutes therefore, — yet himself,
A creature with a creature's qualities.
Make them agree, these two conceptions! Each
Abolishes the other. Is man weak,
Foolish and bad? He must be Ahriman,
Co-equal with an Ormuzd, Bad with Good,
Or else a thing made at the Prime Sole Will,
Doing a maker's pleasure — with results
Which — call, the wide world over, 'what must be' —
But, from man's point of view, and only point
Possible to his powers, call — evidence
Of goodness, wisdom, strength? we mock ourselves
In all that 's best of us, — man's blind but sure
Craving for these in very deed not word,
Reality and not illusion. Well, —
Since these nowhere exist — nor there where cause
Must have effect, nor here where craving means
Craving unfollowed by fit consequence
And full supply, aye sought for, never found —
These — what are they but man 's own rule of right?
A scheme of goodness recognized by man,
Although by man unrealizable, —
Not God's with whom to will were to perform:
Nowise performed here, therefore never willed.
What follows but that God, who could the best,
Has willed the worst, — while man, with power to match
Will with performance, were deservedly
Hailed the supreme — provided . . . here 's the touch
That breaks the bubble . . . this concept of man's
Were man's own work, his birth of heart and brain,
His native grace, no alien gift at all.
The bubble breaks here. Will of man create?
No more than this my hand which strewed the beans
Produced them also from its finger-tips.
Back goes creation to its source, source prime
And ultimate, the single and the sole."

"How reconcile discordancy, — unite
Notion and notion — God that only can
Yet does not, — man that would indeed

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But just as surely cannot, — both in one?
What help occurs to thy intelligence?"

"Ah, the beans, — or, — example better yet, —
A carpet-web I saw once leave the loom
And lie at gorgeous length in Ispahan!
The weaver plied his work with lengths of silk
Dyed each to match some jewel as it might,
And wove them, this by that. 'How comes it, friend,' —
(Quoth I) — 'that while, apart, this fiery hue,
That watery dimness, either shocks the eye,
So blinding bright, or else offends again,
By dulness, — yet the two, set each by each,
Somehow produce a color born of both,
A medium profitable to the sight?'
'Such medium is the end whereat I aim,' —
Answered my craftsman: 'there 's no single tinct
Would satisfy the eye's desire to taste
The secret of the diamond: join extremes
Results a serviceable medium-ghost,
The diamond's simulation. Even so
I needs must blend the quality of man
With quality of God, and so assist
Mere human sight to understand my Life,
What is, what should be, — understand thereby
Wherefore I hate the first and love the last, —
Understand why things so present themselves
To me, placed here to prove I understand.
Thus, from beginning runs the chain to end,
And binds me plain enough. By consequence,
I bade thee tolerate, — not kick and cuff
The man who held that natures did in fact
Blend so, since so thyself must have them blend
In fancy, if it take a flight so far."

"A power, confessed past knowledge, nay, past thought,
— Thus thought thus known!"

"To know of, think about —
Is all man's sum of faculty effects
When exercised on earth's least atom, Son!
What was, what is, what may such atom be?
No answer! Still, what seems it to man's sense?
An atom with some certain properties
Known about, thought of as occasion needs,
— Man's — but occasions of the universe?

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Unthinkable, unknowable to man.
Yet, since to think and know fire through and through
Exceeds man, is the warmth of fire unknown,
Its uses — are they so unthinkable?
Pass from such obvious power to powers unseen,
Undreamed of save in their sure consequence:
Take that, we spoke of late, which draws to ground
The staff my hand lets fall: it draws, at least —
Thus much man thinks and knows, if nothing more."

"Ay, but man puts no mind into such power!
He neither thanks it, when an apple drops,
Nor prays it spare his pate while underneath.
Does he thank Summer though it plumped the rind?
Why thank the other force — whate'er its name —
Which gave him teeth to bite and tongue to taste
And throat to let the pulp pass? Force and force,
No end of forces! Have they mind like man?"

"Suppose thou visit our lord Shalim-Shah,
Bringing thy tribute as appointed. 'Here
Come I to pay my due!' Whereat one slave
Obsequious spreads a carpet for thy foot,
His fellow offers sweetmeats, while a third
Prepares a pipe: what thanks or praise have they?
Such as befit prompt service. Gratitude
Goes past them to the Shah whose gracious nod
Set all the sweet civility at work;
But for his ordinance, I much suspect,
My scholar had been left to cool his heels
Uncarpeted, or warm them — likelier still —
With bastinado for intrusion. Slaves
Needs must obey their master: 'force and force,
No end of forces,' act as bids some force
Supreme o'er all and each: where find that one?
How recognize him? Simply as thou didst
The Shah — by reasoning 'Since I feel a debt,
Behoves me pay the same to one aware
I have my duty, he his privilege.'
Didst thou expect the slave who charged thy pipe
Would serve as well to take thy tribute-bag
And save thee further trouble?"

"Be it so!
The sense within me that I owe a debt
Assures me — somewhere must be somebody

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Ready to take his due. All comes to this —
Where due is, there acceptance follows: find
Him who accepts the due! and why look far?
Behold thy kindred compass thee about!
Ere thou wast born and after thou shalt die,
Heroic man stands forth as Shahan-Shah.
Rustem and Gew, Gudarz and all the rest,
How come they short of lordship that 's to seek?
Dead worthies! but men live undoubtedly
Gifted as Sindokht, sage Sulayman's match,
Valiant like Kawah: ay, and while earth lasts
Such heroes shall abound there — all for thee
Who profitest by all the present, past,
And future operation of thy race.
Why, then, o'erburdened with a debt of thanks,
Look wistful for some hand from out the clouds
To take it, when, all round, a multitude
Would ease thee in a trice?"

"Such tendered thanks
Would tumble back to who craved riddance, Son!
— Who but my sorry self? See! stars are out —
Stars which, unconscious of thy gaze beneath,
Go glorifying, and glorify thee too
— Those Seven Thrones, Zurah's beauty, weird Parwin!
Whether shall love and praise to stars be paid
Or — say — some Mubid who, for good to thee
Blind at thy birth, by magic all his own
Opened thine eyes, and gave the sightless sight,
Let the stars' glory enter? Say his charm
Worked while thyself lay sleeping: as he went
Thou wakedst: 'What a novel sense have I!
Whom shall I love and praise?' 'The stars, each orb
Thou standest rapt beneath,' proposes one:
'Do not they live their life, and please themselves,
And so please thee? What more is requisite?'
Make thou this answer: 'If indeed no mage
Opened my eyes and worked a miracle,
Then let the stars thank me who apprehend
That such an one is white, such other blue!
But for my apprehension both were blank.
Cannot I close my eyes and bid my brain
Make whites and blues, conceive without stars' help,
New qualities of color? were my sight
Lost or misleading, would yon red — I judge
A ruby's benefaction — stand for aught

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But green from vulgar glass? Myself appraise
Lustre and lustre; should I overlook
Fomalhaut and declare some fen-fire king,
Who shall correct me, lend me eyes he trusts
No more than I trust mine? My mage for me!
I never saw him: if he never was,
I am the arbitrator!' No, my Son!
Let us sink down to thy similitude:
I eat my apple, relish what is ripe —
The sunny side, admire its rarity
Since half the tribe is wrinkled, and the rest
Hide commonly a maggot in the core, —
And down Zerdusht goes with due smack of lips:
But — thank an apple? He who made my mouth
To masticate, my palate to approve,
My maw to further the concoction — Him
I thank, — but for whose work, the orchard's wealth
Might prove so many gall-nuts — stocks or stones
For aught that I should think, or know, or care."

"Why from the world," Ferishtah smiled "should thanks
Go to this work of mine? If worthy praise,
Praised let it be and welcome: as verse ranks,
So rate my verse: if good therein outweighs
Aught faulty judged, judge justly! Justice says:
Be just to fact, or blaming or approving:
But — generous? No, nor loving!

"Loving! what claim to love has work of mine?
Concede my life were emptied of its gains
To furnish forth and fill work's strict confine,
Who works so for the world's sake — he complains
With cause when hate, not love, rewards his pains
I looked beyond the world for truth and beauty:
Sought, found, and did my duty."

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EPILOGUE.

Oh, Love — no, Love! All the noise below, Love,
Groanings all and moanings — none of Life I lose!
All of Life 's a cry just of weariness and woe, Love —
"Hear at least, thou happy one!" How can I, Love, but choose?

Only, when I do hear, sudden circle round me
— Much as when the moon's might frees a space from cloud —
Iridescent splendors · gloom — would else confound me —
Barriered off and banished far — bright-edged the blackest shroud!

Thronging through the cloud-rift, whose are they, the faces
Faint revealed yet sure divined, the famous ones of old?
"What" — they smile — "our names, our deeds so soon erases
Time upon his tablet where Life's glory lies enrolled?

"Was it for mere fool's-play, make-believe and mumming,
So we battled it like men, not boylike sulked or whined?
Each of us heard clang God's 'Come!' and each was coming:
Soldiers all, to forward-face, not sneaks to lag behind!

"How of the field's fortune? That concerned our Leader!
Led, we struck our stroke nor cared for doings left and right:
Each as on his sole head, failer or succeeder,
Lay the blame or lit the praise: no care for cowards: fight!"

Then the cloud-rift broadens, spanning earth that 's under,
Wide our world displays its worth, man's strife and strife's success:
All the good and beauty, wonder crowning wonder,
Till my heart and soul applaud perfection, nothing less.

Only, at heart's utmost joy and triumph, terror
Sudden turns the blood to ice: a chill wind disencharms
All the late enchantment! What if all be error —
If the halo irised round my head were, Love, thine arms?

Palazzo Giustinian-Recanati, Venice:
December 1, 1883.

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PARLEYINGS WITH CERTAIN PEOPLE

APOLLO AND THE FATES

A PROLOGUE

(Hymn. in Mercurium, v. 559. Eumenides, vv. 693-4, 697-8. Alcestis, vv. 12, 33.)

APOLLO. (*From above.*)

Flame at my footfall, Parnassus! Apollo,
Breaking ablaze on thy topmost peak,
Burns thence, down to the depths — dread hollow —
Haunt of the Dire Ones. Haste! They wreak
Wrath on Admetus whose respite I seek.

THE FATES. (*Below. Darkness.*)

Dragonwise couched in the womb of our Mother,
Coiled at thy nourishing heart's core, Night!
Dominant Dreads, we, one by the other,
Deal to each mortal his dole of light
On earth — the upper, the glad, the bright.

CLOTHO.

Even so: thus from my loaded spindle
Plucking a pinch of the fleece, lo, "Birth"
Brays from my bronze lip: life I kindle:
Look, 't is a man! go, measure on earth
The minute thy portion, whatever its worth!

LACHESIS.

Woe-purfled, weal-prankt, — if it speed, if it linger, —
Life's substance and show are determined by me,
Who, meting out, mixing with sure thumb and finger,
Lead life the due length: is all smoothness and glee
All tangle and grief? Take the lot, my decree!

ATROPOS.

— Which I make an end of: the smooth as the tangled
My shears cut asunder: each snap shrieks "One more
Mortal makes sport for us Moirai who dangled
The puppet grotesquely till earth's solid floor
Proved film he fell through, lost in Nought as before."

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CLOTHO.

I spin thee a thread. Live, Admetus! Produce him!

LACHESIS.

Go, — brave, wise, good, happy! Now chequer the thread!
He is slaved for, yet loved by a god. I unloose him
A goddess-sent plague. He has conquered, is wed,
Men crown him, he stands at the height, —

ATROPOS.

He is . . .

APOLLO. (*Entering: Light.*)

"Dead?"

Nay, swart spinsters! So I surprise you
Making and marring the fortunes of Man?
Huddling — no marvel, your enemy eyes you —
Head by head bat-like, blots under the ban
Of daylight earth's blessing since time began!

THE FATES.

Back to thy blest earth, prying Apollo!
Shaft upon shaft transpierce with thy beams
Earth to the centre, — spare but this hollow
Hewn out of Night's heart, where our mystery seems
Mewed from day's malice: wake earth from her dreams!

APOLLO.

Crones, 't is your dusk selves I startle from slumber:
Day's god deposes you — queens Night-crowned!
— Plying your trade in a world ye encumber,
Fashioning Man's web of life — spun, wound,
Left the length ye allot till a clip strews the ground!

Behold I bid truce to your doleful amusement —
Annulled by a sunbeam!

THE FATES.

Boy, are not we peers?

APOLLO.

You with the spindle grant birth: whose inducement
But yours — with the niggardly digits — endears
To mankind chance and change, good and evil? Your shears ...

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ATROPOS.

Ay, mine end the conflict: so much is no fable.
We spin, draw to length, cut asunder: what then?
So it was, and so is, and so shall be: art able
To alter life's law for ephemeral men?

APOLLO.

Nor able nor willing. To threescore and ten

Extend but the years of Admetus! Disaster
O'ertook me, and, banished by Zeus, I became
A servant to one who forbore me though master:
True lovers were we. Discontinue your game,
Let him live whom I loved, then hate on, all the same!

THE FATES.

And what if we granted — law-flouter, use-trampler —
His life at the suit of an upstart? Judge, thou —
Of joy were it fuller, of span because ampler?
For love's sake, not hate's, end Admetus — ay, now —
Not a gray hair on head, nor a wrinkle on brow!

For, boy, 't is illusion: from thee comes a glimmer
Transforming to beauty life blank at the best.
Withdraw — and how looks life at worst, when to shimmer
Succeeds the sure shade, and Man's lot frowns — confessed
Mere blackness chance-brightened? Whereof shall attest

The truth this same mortal, the darling thou stylest,
Whom love would advantage, — eke out, day by day,
A life which 't is solely thyself reconcilest
Thy friend to endure, — life with hope: take away
Hope's gleam from Admetus, he spurns it. For, say —

What 's infancy? Ignorance, idleness, mischief:
Youth ripens to arrogance, foolishness, greed:
Age — impotence, churlishness, rancor: call *this* chief
Of boons for thy loved one? Much rather bid speed
Our function, let live whom thou hatest indeed!

Persuade thee, bright boy-thing! Our eld be instructive!

APOLLO.

And certes youth owns the experience of age.
Ye hold then, grave seniors, my beams are productive

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— They solely — of good that's mere semblance, engage
Man's eye — gilding evil, Man's true heritage?

THE FATES.

So, even so! From without, — at due distance
If viewed, — set a-sparkle, reflecting thy rays, —
Life mimics the sun: but, withdraw such assistance,
The counterfeit goes, the reality stays —
An ice-ball disguised as a fire-orb.

APOLLO.

What craze

Possesses the fool then whose fancy conceits him
As happy?

THE FATES.

Man happy?

APOLLO.

If otherwise — solve
This doubt which besets me! What friend ever greets him
Except with "Live long as the seasons revolve,"
Not "Death to thee straightway"? Your doctrines absolve

Such hailing from hatred: yet Man should know best.
He talks it, and glibly, as life were a load
Man fain would be rid of: when put to the test,
He whines "Let it lie, leave me trudging the road
That is rugged so far, but methinks" . . .

THE FATES.

Ay, 't is owed

To that glamour of thine, he bethinks him "Once past
The stony, some patch, nay, a smoothness of sward
Awaits my tired foot: life turns easy at last" —
Thy largess so lures him, he looks for reward
Of the labor and sorrow.

APOLLO.

It seems, then — debarred

Of illusion — (I needs must acknowledge the plea)
Man desponds and despairs. Yet, — still further to draw
Due profit from counsel, — suppose there should be
Some power in himself, some compensative law
By virtue of which, independently . . .

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THE FATES.

Faugh!
Strength hid in the weakling!
What bowl-shape hast there,
Thus laughingly proffered? A gift to our shrine?
Thanks — worsted in argument! Not so? Declare
Its purpose!

APOLLO.

I proffer earth's product, not mine.
Taste, try, and approve Man's invention of — WINE!

THE FATES.

We feeding suck honeycombs.

APOLLO.

Sustenance meagre!
Such fare breeds the fumes that show all things amiss.
Quaff wine, — how the spirits rise nimble and eager,
Unscale the dim eyes! To Man's cup grant one kiss
Of your lip, then allow — no enchantment like this!

CLOTHO.

Unhook wings, unhood brows! Dost hearken?

LACHESIS.

I listen:
I see — smell the food these fond mortals prefer
To our feast, the bee's bounty!

ATROPOS.

The thing leaps! But — glisten
Its best, I withstand it — unless all concur
In adventure so novel.

APOLLO.

Ye drink?

THE FATES.

We demur.

APOLLO.

Sweet Trine, be indulgent nor scout the contrivance
Of Man — Bacchus-prompted! The juice, I uphold,
Illuminates gloom without sunny connivance,
Turns fear into hope and makes cowardice bold, —
Touching all that is leadlike in life turns it gold!

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THE FATES.

Faith foolish as false!

APOLLO.

But essay it, soft sisters!
Then mock as ye may. Lift the chalice to lip!
Good: thou next — and thou! Seems the web, to you twisters
Of life's yarn, so worthless?

CLOTHO.

Who guessed that one sip
Would impart such a lightness of limb?

LACHESIS.

I could skip

In a trice from the pied to the plain in my woof!
What parts each from either? A hair's breadth, no inch.
Once learn the right method of stepping aloof,
Though on black next foot falls, firm I fix it, nor flinch,
— Such my trust white succeeds!

ATROPOS.

One could live — at a pinch!

APOLLO.

What, beldames? Earth's yield, by Man's skill, can effect
Such a cure of sick sense that ye spy the relation
Of evil to good? But drink deeper, correct
Blear sight more convincingly still! Take your station
Beside me, drain dregs! Now for edification!

Whose gift have ye gulped? Thank not me but my brother,
Blithe Bacchus, our youngest of godships. 'T was he
Found all boons to all men, by one god or other
Already conceded, so judged there must be
New guerdon to grace the new advent, you see!

Else how would a claim to Man's homage arise?
The plan lay arranged of his mixed woe and weal,
So disposed — such Zeus' will — with design to make wise
The witless — that false things were mingled with real,
Good with bad: such the lot whereto law set the seal.

Now, human of instinct — since Semele's son,
Yet minded divinely — since fathered by Zeus,

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With nought Bacchus tampered, undid not things done,
Owned wisdom anterior, would spare wont and use,
Yet change — without shock to old rule — introduce.

Regard how your cavern from crag-tip to base
Frowns sheer, height and depth adamantine, one death!
I rouse with a beam the whole rampart, displace
No splinter — yet see how my flambeau, beneath
And above, bids this gem wink, that crystal unsheathe!

Withdraw beam — disclosure once more Night forbids you
Of spangle and sparkle — Day's chance-gift, surmised
Rock's permanent birthright: my potency rids you
No longer of darkness, yet light — recognized —
Proves darkness a mask: day lives on though disguised.

If Bacchus by wine's aid avail so to fluster
Your sense, that life's fact grows from adverse and thwart
To helpful and kindly by means of a cluster —
Mere hand-squeeze, earth's nature sublimed by Man's art —
Shall Bacchus claim thanks wherein Zeus has no part?

Zeus — wisdom anterior? No, maids, be admonished!
If morn's touch at base worked such wonders, much more
Had noontide in absolute glory astonished
Your den, filled a-top to o'erflowing. I pour
No such mad confusion. 'T is Man's to explore

Up and down, inch by inch, with the taper his reason:
No torch, it suffices — held deftly and straight.
Eyes, purblind at first, feel their way in due season,
Accept good with bad, till unseemly debate
Turns concord — despair, acquiescence in fate.

Who works this but Zeus? Are not instinct and impulse,
Not concept and incept his work through Man's soul
On Man's sense? Just as wine ere it reach brain must brim
pulse,
Zeus' flash stings the mind that speeds body to goal,
Bids pause at no part but press on, reach the whole.

For petty and poor is the part ye envisage
When — (quaff away, cummers!) — ye view, last and first,
As evil Man's earthly existence. Come! *Is* age,
Is infancy — manhood — so uninterspersed
With good — some faint sprinkle?

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CLOTHO.

I 'd speak if I durst.

APOLLO.

Draughts dregward loose tongue-tie.

LACHESIS.

I 'd see, did no web
Set eyes somehow winking.

APOLLO.

Drains-deep lies their purge
— True collyrium!

ATROPOS.

Words, surging at high-tide, soon ebb
From starved ears.

APOLLO.

Drink but down to the source, they resurge.
Join hands! Yours and yours too! A dance or a dirge?

CHORUS.

Quashed be our quarrel! Sourly and smilingly,
Bare and gowned, bleached limbs and browned,
Drive we a dance, three and one, reconcilingly,
Thanks to the cup where dissension is drowned,
Defeat proves triumphant and slavery crowned.

Infancy? What if the rose-streak of morning
Pale and depart in a passion of tears?
Once to have hoped is no matter for scorning!
Love once — e'en love's disappointment endears!
A minute's success pays the failure of years.

Manhood — the actual? Nay, praise the potential!
(Bound upon bound, foot it around!)
What *is?* No, what *may* be — sing! that 's Man's essential!
(Ramp, tramp, stamp and compound
Fancy with fact — the lost secret is found!)

Age? Why, fear ends there: the contest concluded,
Man *did* live his life, *did* escape from the fray:
Not scratchless but unscathed, he somehow eluded
Each blow fortune dealt him, and conquers to-day:
To-morrow — new chance and fresh strength, — might we say?

Laud then Man's life — no defeat but a triumph!

[*Explosion from the earth's centre.*

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CLOTHO.

Ha, loose hands!

LACHESIS.

I reel in a swound.

ATROPOS.

Horror yawns under me, while from on high — humph!
Lightnings astound, thunders resound,
Vault-roof reverberates, groans the ground! [*Silence.*

APOLLO.

I acknowledge.

THE FATES.

Hence, trickster! Straight sobered are we!
The portent assures 't was our tongue spoke the truth,
Not thine. While the vapor encompassed us three
We conceived and bore knowledge — a bantling uncouth,
Old brains shudder back from: so — take it, rash youth!

Lick the lump into shape till a cry comes!

APOLLO.

I hear.

THE FATES.

Dumb music, dead eloquence! Say it, or sing!
What was quickened in us and thee also?

APOLLO.

I fear.

THE FATES.

Half female, half male — go, ambiguous thing!
While we speak — perchance sputter — pick up what we fling!

Known yet ignored, nor divined nor unguessed,
Such is Man's law of life. Do we strive to declare
What is ill, what is good in our spinning? Worst, best,
Change hues of a sudden: now here and now there
Flits the sign which decides: all about yet nowhere.

'T is willed so, — that Man's life be lived, first to last,
Up and down, through and through — not in portions, for sooth,
To pick and to choose from. Our shuttles fly fast,
Weave living, not life sole and whole: as age — youth,
So death completes living, shows life in its truth.

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Man learningly lives: till death helps him — no lore!
It is doom and must be. Dost submit?

APOLLO.

I assent —
Concede but Admetus! So much if no more
Of my prayer grant as peace-pledge! Be gracious, though blent,
Good and ill, love and hate streak your life-gift!

THE FATES.

Content!

Such boon we accord in due measure. Life's term
We lengthen should any be moved for love's sake
To forego life's fulfilment, renounce in the germ
Fruit mature — bliss or woe — either infinite. Take
Or leave thy friend's lot: on his head be the stake!

APOLLO.

On mine, griesly gammers! Admetus, I know thee!
Thou prizest the right these unwittingly give
Thy subjects to rush, pay obedience they owe thee!
Importunate one with another they strive
For the glory to die that their king may survive.

Friends rush: and who first in all Pheræ appears
But thy father to serve as thy substitute?

CLOTHO.

Bah!

APOLLO.

Ye wince? Then his mother, well stricken in years,
Advances her claim — or his wife —

LACHESIS.

Tra-la-la!

APOLLO.

But he spurns the exchange, rather dies!

ATROPOS.

Ha, ha, ha!

[*Apollo ascends. Darkness*

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WITH BERNARD DE MANDEVILLE

I.

Ay, this same midnight, by this chair of mine,
Come and review thy counsels: art thou still
Staunch to their teaching? — not as fools opine
Its purport might be, but as subtler skill
Could, through turbidity, the loaded line
Of logic casting, sound deep, deeper, till
It touched a quietude and reached a shrine
And recognized harmoniously combine
Evil with good, and hailed truth's triumph — thine,
Sage dead long since, Bernard de Mandeville!

II.

Only, 't is no fresh knowledge that I crave,
Fuller truth yet, new gainings from the grave;
Here we alive must needs deal fairly, turn
To what account Man may Man's portion, learn
Man's proper play with truth in part, before
Entrusted with the whole. I ask no more
Than smiling witness that I do my best
With doubtful doctrine: afterwards the rest!
So, silent face me while I think and speak!
A full disclosure? Such would outrage law.
Law deals the same with soul and body: seek
Full truth my soul may, when some babe, I saw
A new-born weakling, starts up strong — not weak —
Man every whit, absolved from earning awe,
Pride, rapture, if the soul attains to wreak
Its will on flesh, at last can thrust, lift, draw,
As mind bids muscle — mind which long has striven,
Painfully urging body's impotence
To effort whereby — once law's barrier riven,
Life's rule abolished — body might dispense
With infancy's probation, straight be given
— Not by foiled darings, fond attempts back-driven,
Fine faults of growth, brave sins which saint when shriven —
To stand full-statured in magnificence.

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III.

No : as with body so deals law with soul
That's stung to strength through weakness, strives for good
Through evil, — earth its race-ground, heaven its goal,
Presumably : so far I understood
Thy teaching long ago. But what means this
— Objected by a mouth which yesterday
Was magisterial in antithesis
To half the truths we hold, or trust we may,
Though tremblingly the while? "No sign" — groaned he —
"No stirring of God's finger to denote
He wills that right should have supremacy
On earth, not wrong! How helpful could we quote
But one poor instance when He interposed
Promptly and surely and beyond mistake
Between oppression and its victim, closed
Accounts with sin for once, and bade us wake
From our long dream that justice bears no sword,
Or else forgets whereto its sharpness serves!
So might we safely mock at what unnerves
Faith now, be spared the sapping fear's increase
That haply evil's strife with good shall cease
Never on earth. Nay, after earth, comes peace
Born out of life-long battle? Man's lip curves
With scorn : there, also, what if justice swerves
From dealing doom, sets free by no swift stroke
Right fettered here by wrong, but leaves life's yoke —
Death should loose man from — fresh laid, past release?"

IV.

Bernard de Mandeville, confute for me
This parlous friend who captured or set free
Thunderbolts at his pleasure, yet would draw
Back, panic-stricken by some puny straw
Thy gold-rimmed amber-headed cane had whisked
Out of his pathway if the object risked
Encounter, 'scaped thy kick from buckled shoe!
As when folk heard thee in old days pooh-pooh
Addison's tye-wig preachment, grant this friend —
(Whose groan I hear, with guffaugh at the end
Disposing of mock-melancholy) — grant
His bilious mood one potion, ministrant
Of homely wisdom, healthy wit! For, hear!
"With power and will, let preference appear
By intervention ever and aye, help good

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When evil's mastery is understood
In some plain outrage, and triumphant wrong
Tramples weak right to nothingness: nay, long
Ere such sad consummation brings despair
To right's adherents, ah, what help it were
If wrong lay strangled in the birth — each head
Of the hatched monster promptly crushed, instead
Of spared to gather venom! We require
No great experience that the inch-long worm,
Free of our heel, would grow to vomit fire,
And one day plague the world in dragon form.
So should wrong merely peep abroad to meet
Wrong's due quietus, leave our world's way safe
For honest walking."

v.

Sage, once more repeat
Instruction! 'T is a sore to soothe not chafe.
Ah, Fabulist, what luck, could I contrive
To coax from thee another "Grumbling Hive"!
My friend himself wrote fables short and sweet:
Ask him — "Suppose the Gardener of Man's ground
Plants for a purpose, side by side with good,
Evil — (and that He does so — look around!
What does the field show?) — were it understood
That purposely the noxious plant was found
Vexing the virtuous, poison close to food,
If, at first stealing-forth of life in stalk
And leaflet-promise, quick His spud should balk
Evil from budding foliage, bearing fruit?
Such timely treatment of the offending root
Might strike the simple as wise husbandry,
But swift sure extirpation scarce would suit
Shrewder observers. Seed once sown thrives: why
Frustrate its product, miss the quality
Which sower binds himself to count upon?
Had seed fulfilled the destined purpose, gone
Unhindered up to harvest — what know I
But proof were gained that every growth of good
Sprang consequent on evil's neighborhood?"
So said your shrewdness: true — so did not say
That other sort of theorists who held
Mere unintelligence prepared the way
For either seed's upsprouting: you repelled
Their notion that both kinds could sow themselves.
True! but admit 't is understanding delves

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And drops each germ, what else but folly thwarts
The doer's settled purpose? Let the sage
Concede a use to evil, though there starts
Full many a burgeon thence, to disengage
With thumb and finger lest it spoil the yield
Too much of good's main tribute! But our main
Tough-tendoned mandrake-monster — purge the field
Of him for once and all? It follows plain
Who set him there to grow beholds repealed
His primal law: His ordinance proves vain:
And what beseems a king who cannot reign,
But to drop sceptre valid arm should wield?

VI.

"Still there 's a parable" — retorts my friend —
"Shows agriculture with a difference!
What of the crop and weeds which solely blend
Because, once planted, none may pluck them thence?
The Gardener contrived thus? Vain pretence!
An enemy it was who unawares
Ruined the wheat by interspersing tares.
Where 's our desiderated forethought? Where 's
Knowledge, where power and will in evidence?
'T is Man's-play merely! Craft foils rectitude,
Malignity defeats beneficence.
And grant, at very last of all, the feud
'Twixt good and evil ends, strange thoughts intrude
Though good be garnered safely, and good's foe
Bundled for burning. Thoughts steal: 'Even so —
Why grant tares leave to thus o'er-top, o'ertower
Their field-mate, boast the stalk and flaunt the flower,
Triumph one sunny minute? Knowledge, power,
And will thus worked?' Man's fancy makes the fault!
Man, with the narrow mind, must cram inside
His finite God's infinitude, — earth's vault
He bids comprise the heavenly far and wide,
Since Man may claim a right to understand
What passes understanding. So, succinct
And trimly set in order, to be scanned
And scrutinized, lo — the divine lies linked
Fast to the human, free to move as moves
Its proper match: awhile they keep the grooves,
Discreetly side by side together pace,
Till sudden comes a stumble incident
Likely enough to Man's weak-footed race,
And he discovers — wings in rudiment,

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Such as he boasts, which full-grown, free-distent
Would lift him skyward, fail of flight while pent
Within humanity's restricted space.
Abjure each fond attempt to represent
The formless, the illimitable! Trace
No outline, try no hint of human face
Or form or hand!"

VII.

Friend, here 's a tracing meant
To help a guess at truth you never knew.
Bend but those eyes now, using mind's eye too,
And note — sufficient for all purposes —
The ground-plan — map you long have yearned for — yes,
Made out in markings — more what artist can? —
Goethe's Estate in Weimar, — just a plan!
A is the House, and *B* the Garden-gate,
And *C* the Grass-plot — you 've the whole estate
Letter by letter, down to *Y* the Pond,
And *Z* the Pig-stye. Do you look beyond
The algebraic signs, and captious say
"Is *A* the House? But where 's the Roof to *A*,
Where 's Door, where 's Window? Needs must House have such!"
Ay, that were folly. Why so very much
More foolish than our mortal purblind way
Of seeking in the symbol no mere point
To guide our gaze through what were else inane,
But things — their solid selves? "Is, joint by joint,
Orion man-like, — as these dots explain
His constellation? Flesh composed of suns —
How can such be?" exclaim the simple ones.
Look through the sign to the thing signified —
Shown nowise, point by point at best descried,
Each an orb's topmost sparkle: all beside
Its shine is shadow: turn the orb one jot —
Up flies the new flash to reveal 't was not
The whole sphere late flamboyant in your ken!

VIII.

"What need of symbolizing? Fitlier men
Would take on tongue mere facts — few, faint and far,
Still facts not fancies: quite enough they are,
That Power, that Knowledge, and that Will, — add then
Immensity, Eternity: these jar
Nowise with our permitted thought and speech.
Why human attributes?"

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A myth may teach:
Only, who better would expound it thus
Must be Euripides not Æschylus.

IX.

Boundingly up through Night's wall dense and dark,
Embattled crags and clouds, out-broke the Sun
Above the conscious earth, and one by one
Her heights and depths absorbed to the last spark
His fluid glory, from the far fine ridge
Of mountain-granite which, transformed to gold,
Laughed first the thanks back, to the vale's dusk fold
On fold of vapor-swathing, like a bridge
Shattered beneath some giant's stamp. Night wist
Her work done and betook herself in mist
To marsh and hollow, there to bide her time
Blindly in acquiescence. Everywhere
Did earth acknowledge Sun's embrace sublime,
Thrilling her to the heart of things: since there
No ore ran liquid, no spar branched anew,
No arrowy crystal gleamed, but straightway grew
Glad through the inrush — glad nor more nor less
Than, 'neath his gaze, forest and wilderness,
Hill, dale, land, sea, the whole vast stretch and spread,
The universal world of creatures bred
By Sun's munificence, alike gave praise —
All creatures but one only: gaze for gaze,
Joyless and thankless, who — all scowling can —
Protests against the innumerous praises? Man,
Sullen and silent.
Stand thou forth then, state
Thy wrong, thou sole aggrieved — disconsolate —
While every beast, bird, reptile, insect, gay
And glad acknowledges the bounteous day!

X.

Man speaks now: "What avails Sun's earth-felt thrill
To me? Sun penetrates the ore, the plant —
They feel and grow: perchance with subtler skill
He interfuses fly, worm, brute, until
Each favored object pays life's ministrant
By pressing, in obedience to his will,
Up to completion of the task prescribed,
So stands and stays a type. Myself imbibed
Such influence also, stood and stand complete —
The perfect Man, — head, body, hands and feet,

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True to the pattern: but does that suffice?
How of my superadded mind which needs
— Not to be, simply, but to do, and pleads
For — more than knowledge that by some device
Sun quickens matter: mind is nobly fain
To realize the marvel, make — for sense
As mind — the unseen visible, condense
— Myself — Sun's all-pervading influence
So as to serve the needs of mind, explain
What now perplexes. Let the oak increase
His corrugated strength on strength, the palm
Lift joint by joint her fan-fruit, ball and balm, —
Let the coiled serpent bask in bloated peace, —
The eagle, like some skyey derelict,
Drift in the blue, suspended, glorying, —
The lion lord it by the desert-spring, —
What know or care they of the power which pricked
Nothingness to perfection? I, instead,
When all developed still am found a thing
All-incomplete: for what though flesh had force
Transcending theirs — hands able to unring
The tightened snake's coil, eyes that could outcourse
The eagle's soaring, voice whereat the king
Of carnage couched discrowned? Mind seeks to see,
Touch, understand, by mind inside of me,
The outside mind — whose quickening I attain
To recognize — I only. All in vain
Would mind address itself to render plain
The nature of the essence. Drag what lurks
Behind the operation — that which works
Latently everywhere by outward proof —
Drag that mind forth to face mine? No! aloof
I solely crave that one of all the beams
Which do Sun's work in darkness, at my will
Should operate — myself for once have skill
To realize the energy which streams
Flooding the universe. Above, around,
Beneath — why mocks that mind my own thus found
Simply of service, when the world grows dark,
To half-surmise — were Sun's use understood,
I might demonstrate him supplying food,
Warmth, life, no less the while? To grant one spark
Myself may deal with — make it thaw my blood
And prompt my steps, were truer to the mark
Of mind's requirement than a half-surmise
That somehow secretly is operant,

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A power all matter feels, mind only tries
To comprehend! Once more — no idle vaunt
'Man comprehends the Sun's self!' Mysteries
At source why probe into? Enough: display,
Make demonstrable, how, by night as day,
Earth's centre and sky's outspan, all 's informed
Equally by Sun's efflux! — source from whence
If just one spark I drew, full evidence
Were mine of fire ineffably enthroned —
Sun's self made palpable to Man!"

XI.

Thus moaned
Man till Prometheus helped him, — as we learn, —
Offered an artifice whereby he drew
Sun's rays into a focus, — plain and true,
The very Sun in little: made fire burn
And henceforth do Man service — glass-conglobed
Though to a pin-point circle — all the same
Comprising the Sun's self, but Sun disrobed
Of that else-unconceived essential flame
Borne by no naked sight. Shall mind's eye strive
Achingly to companion as it may
The supersubtle effluence, and contrive
To follow beam and beam upon their way
Hand-breadth by hand-breadth, till sense faint — confessed
Frustrate, eluded by unknown unguessed
Infinitude of action? Idle quest!
Rather ask aid from optics. Sense, descry
The spectrum — mind, infer immensity!
Little? In little, light, warmth, life are blessed —
Which, in the large, who sees to bless? Not I
More than yourself: so, good my friend, keep still
Trustful with — me? with thee, sage Mandeville!

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WITH DANIEL BARTOLI *

I.

Don, the divinest women that have walked
Our world were scarce those saints of whom we talked.
My saint, for instance — worship if you will!
'T is pity poets need historians' skill:
What legendary 's worth a chronicle?

II.

Come, now! A great lord once upon a time
Visited — oh a king, of kings the prime,
To sign a treaty such as never was:
For the king's minister had brought to pass
That this same duke — so style him — must engage
Two of his dukedoms as an heritage
After his death to this exorbitant
Craver of kingship. "Let who lacks go scant,
Who owns much, give the more to!" Why rebuke?
So bids the devil, so obeys the duke.

III.

Now, as it happened, at his sister's house
— Duchess herself — indeed the very spouse
Of the king's uncle, — while the deed of gift
Whereby our duke should cut his rights adrift
Was drawing, getting ripe to sign and seal —
What does the frozen heart but uncongeal
And, shaming his transcendent kin and kith,
Whom do the duke's eyes make acquaintance with?
A girl. "What, sister, may this wonder be?"
"Nobody! Good as beautiful is she,
With gifts that match her goodness, no faint flaw

* A learned and ingenious writer. "Fu Gesuita e Storico della Compagnia; onde scrisse lunghissime storie, le quali sarebbero lette se non fossero ripiene traboccanti di tutte le superstizioni. . . . Egli vi ha ficcati dentro tanti miracoloni, che diviene una noia insopportabile a chiunque voglia leggere quelle storie: e anche a me, non mi bastò l' animo di proseguire molto avanti." — Angelo Cerutti.

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I' the white: she were the pearl you think you saw,
But that she is — what corresponds to white?
Some other stone, the true pearl's opposite,
As cheap as pearls are costly. She 's — now, guess
Her parentage! Once — twice — thrice? Foiled, confess!
Drugs, duke, her father deals in — faugh, the scents! —
Manna and senna — such medicaments
For payment he compounds you. Stay — stay — stay!
I 'll have no rude speech wrong her! Whither away,
The hot-head? Ah, the scape-grace! She deserves
Respect — compassion, rather! Right it serves
My folly, trusting secrets to a fool!
Already at it, is he? She keeps cool —
Helped by her fan's spread. Well, our state atones
For thus much license, and words break no bones!"
(Hearts, though, sometimes.)

IV.

Next morn 't was "Reason, rate
Rave, sister, on till doomsday! Sure as fate,
I wed that woman — what a woman is
Now that I know, who never knew till this!"
So swore the duke. "I wed her: once again —
Rave, rate, and reason — spend your breath in vain!"

V.

At once was made a contract firm and fast,
Published the banns were, only marriage, last,
Required completion when the Church's rite
Should bless and bid depart, make happy quite
The coupled man and wife forevermore:
Which rite was soon to follow. Just before —
All things at all but end — the folk o' the bride
Flocked to a summons. Pomp the duke defied:
"Of ceremony — so much as empowers,
Nought that exceeds, suits best a tie like ours" —
He smiled — "all else were mere futility.
We vow, God hears us: God and you and I —
Let the world keep at distance! This is why
We choose the simplest forms that serve to bind
Lover and lover of the human kind,
No care of what degree — of kings or clowns —
Come blood and breeding. Courtly smiles and frowns
Miss of their mark, would idly soothe or strike
My style and yours — in one style merged alike —
God's man and woman merely. Long ago

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'T was rounded in my ears 'Duke, wherefore slow
To use a privilege? Needs must one who reigns
Pay reigning's due: since statecraft so ordains —
Wed for the commonweal's sake! law prescribes
One wife: but to submission license bribes
Unruly nature: mistresses accept
— Well, at discretion!' Prove I so inept
A scholar, thus instructed? Dearest, be
Wife and all mistresses in one to me,
Now, henceforth, and forever!" So smiled he.

VI.

Good: but the minister, the crafty one,
Got ear of what was doing — all but done —
Not sooner, though, than the king's very self,
Warned by the sister on how sheer a shelf
Royalty's ship was like to split. "I bar
The abomination! Mix with muck my star?
Shall earth behold prodigiously enorbed
An upstart marsh-born meteor sun-absorbed?
Nuptial me no such nuptials!" "Past dispute,
Majesty speaks with wisdom absolute,"
Admired the minister: "yet, all the same,
I would we may not — while we play his game,
The ducal meteor's — also lose our own,
The solar monarch's: we relieve your throne
Of an ungracious presence, like enough:
Balked of his project he departs in huff,
And so cuts short — dare I remind the king? —
Our not so unsuccessful bargaining.
The contract for eventual heritage
Happens to *pari passu* reach the stage
Attained by just this other contract, — each
Unfixed by signature though fast in speech.
Off goes the duke in dudgeon — off withal
Go with him his two dukedoms past recall.
You save a fool from tasting folly's fruit,
Obtain small thanks thereby, and lose to boot
Sagacity's reward. The jest is grim:
The man will mulct you — for amercing him?
Nay, for . . . permit a poor similitude!
A witless wight in some fantastic mood
Would drown himself: you plunge into the wave,
Pluck forth the undeserving: he, you save,
Pulls you clean under also for your pains.
Sire, little need that I should tax my brains

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To help your inspiration!" "Let him sink!
Always contriving" — hints the royal wink —
"To keep ourselves dry while we claim his clothes."

VII.

Next day, the appointed day for plighting troths
At eve, — so little time to lose, you see,
Before the Church should weld indissolubly
Bond into bond, wed these who, side by side,
Sit each by other, bold groom, blushing bride, —
At the preliminary banquet, graced
By all the lady's kinsfolk come in haste
To share her triumph, — lo, a thunderclap!
"Who importunes now?" "Such is my mishap —
In the king's name! No need that any stir
Except this lady!" bids the minister:
"With her I claim a word apart, no more:
For who gainsays — a guard is at the door.
Hold, duke! Submit you, lady, as I bow
To him whose mouthpiece speaks his pleasure now!
It well may happen I no whit arrest
Your marriage: be it so, — we hope the best!
By your leave, gentles! Lady, pray you, hence!
Duke, with my soul and body's deference!"

VIII.

Doors shut, mouth opens and persuasion flows
Copiously forth. "What flesh shall dare oppose
The king's command? The matter in debate
— How plain it is! Yourself shall arbitrate,
Determine. Since the duke affects to rate
His prize in you beyond all goods of earth,
Accounts as nought old gains of rank and birth,
Ancestral obligation, recent fame,
(We know his feats) — nay, ventures to disclaim
Our will and pleasure almost — by report —
Waives in your favor dukeliness, in short, —
We — ('t is the king speaks) — who might forthwith stay
Such suicidal purpose, brush away
A bad example shame would else record, —
Lean to indulgence rather. At his word
We take the duke: allow him to complete
The cession of his dukedoms, leave our feet
Their footstool when his own head, safe in vault,
Sleeps sound. Nay, would the duke repair his fault
Handsomely, and our forfeited esteem

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Recover, — what if wisely he redeem
The past, — in earnest of good faith, at once
Give us such jurisdiction for the nonce
As may suffice — prevent occasion slip —
And constitute our actual ownership?
Concede this — straightway be the marriage blessed
By warrant of this paper! Things at rest,
This paper duly signed, down drops the bar,
To-morrow you become — from what you are,
The druggist's daughter — not the duke's mere spouse,
But the king's own adopted: heart and house
Open to you — the idol of a court
'Which heaven might copy' — sing our poet-sort.
In this emergency, on you depends
The issue: plead what bliss the king intends!
Should the duke frown, should arguments and prayers,
Nay, tears if need be, prove in vain, — who cares?
We leave the duke to his obduracy,
Companionless, — you, madam, follow me
Without, where divers of the body-guard
Wait signal to enforce the king's award
Of strict seclusion: over you at least
Vibratingly the sceptre threats increased
Precipitation! How avert its crash?"

IX.

"Re-enter, sir! A hand that 's calm, not rash,
Averts it!" quietly the lady said.
"Yourself shall witness."
At the table's head
Where, mid the hushed guests, still the duke sat glued
In blank bewilderment, his spouse pursued
Her speech to end — syllabled quietude.

X.

"Duke, I, your duchess of a day, could take
The hand you proffered me for love's sole sake,
Conscious my love matched yours; as you, myself
Would waive, when need were, all but love — from pelf
To potency. What fortune brings about
Haply in some far future, finds me out,
Faces me on a sudden here and now.
The better! Read — if beating heart allow —
Read this, and bid me rend to rags the shame!
I and your conscience — hear and grant our claim!
Never dare alienate God's gift you hold

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Simply in trust for Him! Choose muck for gold?
Could you so stumble in your choice, cajoled
By what I count my least of worthiness
— The youth, the beauty, — you renounce them — yes,
With all that 's most too: love as well you lose,
Slain by what slays in you the honor! Choose!
Dear — yet my husband — dare I love you yet?"

XI.

How the duke's wrath o'erboiled, — words, words, and yet
More words, — I spare you such fool's fever-fret.
They were not of one sort at all, one size,
As souls go — he and she. 'T is said, the eyes
Of all the lookers-on let tears fall fast.
The minister was mollified at last:
"Take a day, — two days even, ere through pride
You perish, — two days' counsel — then decide!"

XII.

"If I shall save his honor and my soul?
Husband, — this one last time, — you tear the scroll?
Farewell, duke! Sir, I follow in your train!"

XIII.

So she went forth: they never met again,
The duke and she. The world paid compliment
(Is it worth noting?) when, next day, she sent
Certain gifts back — "jewelry fit to deck
Whom you call wife." I know not round what neck
They took to sparkling, in good time — weeks thence.

XIV.

Of all which was the pleasant consequence,
So much and no more — that a fervid youth,
Big-hearted boy, — but ten years old, in truth, —
Laid this to heart and loved, as boyhood can,
The unduchessed lady: boy and lad grew man:
He loved as man perchance may: did meanwhile
Good soldier-service, managed to beguile
The years, no few, until he found a chance:
Then, as at trumpet-summons to advance,
Outbroke the love that stood at arms so long,
Brooked no withstanding longer. They were wed.
Whereon from camp and court alike he fled,
Renounced the sun-king, dropped off into night,
Evermore lost, a ruined satellite:

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And, oh, the exquisite deliciousness
That lapped him in obscurity! You guess
Such joy is fugitive: she died full soon.
He did his best to die — as sun, so moon
Left him, turned dusk to darkness absolute.
Failing of death — why, saintship seemed to suit:
Yes, your sort, Don! He trembled on the verge
Of monkhood: trick of cowl and taste of scourge
He tried: then, kicked not at the pricks perverse,
But took again, for better or for worse,
The old way in the world, and, much the same
Man o' the outside, fairly played life's game.

XV.

"Now, Saint Scholastica, what time she fared
In Paynimrie, behold, a lion glared
Right in her path! Her waist she promptly strips
Of girdle, binds his teeth within his lips,
And, leashed all lamblike, to the Soldan's court
Leads him." Ay, many a legend of the sort
Do you praiseworthily authenticate:
Spare me the rest. This much of no debate
Admits: my lady flourished in grand days
When to be duchess was to dance the hays
Up, down, across the heaven amid its host:
While to be hailed the sun's own self almost —
So close the kinship — was — was —
Saint, for this,
Be yours the feet I stoop to — kneel and kiss!
So human? Then the mouth too, if you will!
Thanks to no legend but a chronicle.

XVI.

One leans to like the duke, too: up we 'll patch
Some sort of saintship for him — not to match
Hers — but man's best and woman's worst amount
So nearly to the same thing, that we count
In man a miracle of faithfulness
If, while unfaithful somewhat, he lay stress
On the main fact that love, when love indeed,
Is wholly solely love from first to last —
Truth — all the rest a lie. Too likely, fast
Enough that necklace went to grace the throat
— Let 's say, of such a dancer as makes doat
The senses when the soul is satisfied —
Trogalia, say the Greeks — a sweetmeat tried

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Approvingly by sated tongue and teeth,
Once body's proper meal consigned beneath
Such unconsidered munching.

XVII.

Fancy's flight
Makes me a listener when, some sleepless night,
The duke reviewed his memories, and aghast
Found that the Present intercepts the Past
With such effect as when a cloud enwraps
The moon and, moon-suffused, plays moon perhaps
To who walks under, till comes, late or soon,
A stumble: up he looks, and lo, the moon
Calm, clear, convincingly herself once more!
How could he 'scape the cloud that thrust between
Him and effulgence? Speak, fool — duke, I mean!

XVIII.

"Who bade you come, brisk-marching bold she-shape,
A terror with those black-balled worlds of eyes,
That black hair bristling solid-built from nape
To crown it coils about? O dread surmise!
Take, tread on, trample under past escape
Your capture, spoil and trophy! Do — devise
Insults for one who, fallen once, ne'er shall rise!

"Mock on, triumphant o'er the prostrate shame!
Laugh 'Here lies he among the false to Love —
Love's loyal liegeman once: the very same
Who, scorning his weak fellows, towered above
Inconstancy: yet why his faith defame?
Our eagle's victor was at least no dove,
No dwarfish knight picked up our giant's glove —

"'When, putting prowess to the proof, faith urged
Her champion to the challenge: had it chanced
That merely virtue, wisdom, beauty — merged
All in one woman — merely these advanced
Their claim to conquest, — hardly had he purged
His mind of memories, dearnesses enhanced
Rather than harmed by death, nor, disentranced,

"'Promptly had he abjured the old pretence
To prove his kind's superior — first to last
Display erect on his heart's eminence
An altar to the never-dying Past.

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For such feat faith might boast fit play of fence
And easily disarm the iconoclast
Called virtue, wisdom, beauty: impudence

" 'Fought in their stead, and how could faith but fall?
There came a bold she-shape brisk-marching, bent
No inch of her imperious stature, tall
As some war-engine from whose top was sent
One shattering volley out of eye's black ball,
And prone lay faith's defender!' Mockery spent?
Malice discharged in full? In that event,

" My queenly impudence, I cover close,
I wrap me round with love of your black hair,
Black eyes, black every wicked inch of those
Limbs' war-tower tallness: so much truth lives there
'Neath the dead heap of lies. And yet — who knows?
What if such things are? No less, such things were.
Then was the man your match whom now you dare

" Treat as existent still. A second truth!
They held — this heap of lies you rightly scorn —
A man who had approved himself in youth
More than a match for — you? for sea-foam-born
Venus herself: you conquer him forsooth?
'T is me his ghost: he died since left and lorn,
As needs must Samson when his hair is shorn.

" Some day, and soon, be sure himself will rise,
Called into life by her who long ago
Left his soul whiling time in flesh-disguise.
Ghosts tired of waiting can play tricks, you know!
Tread, trample me — such sport we ghosts devise,
Waiting the morn-star's reappearance — though
You think we vanish scared by the cock's crow."

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WITH CHRISTOPHER SMART

I.

It seems as if . . . or did the actual chance
Startle me and perplex? Let truth be said!
How might this happen? Dreaming, blindfold led
By visionary hand, did soul's advance
Precede my body's, gain inheritance
Of fact by fancy — so that when I read
At length with waking eyes your Song, instead
Of mere bewilderment, with me first glance
Was but full recognition that in trance
Or merely thought's adventure some old day
Of dim and done-with boyishness, or — well,
Why might it not have been, the miracle
Broke on me as I took my sober way
Through veritable regions of our earth
And made discovery, many a wondrous one?

II.

Anyhow, fact or fancy, such its birth:
I was exploring some huge house, had gone
Through room and room complacently, no dearth
Anywhere of the signs of decent taste,
Adequate culture: wealth had run to waste
Nowise, nor penury was proved by stint:
All showed the Golden Mean without a hint
Of brave extravagance that breaks the rule.
The master of the mansion was no fool
Assuredly, no genius just as sure!
Safe mediocrity had scorned the lure
Of now too much and now too little cost,
And satisfied me sight was never lost
Of moderate design's accomplishment
In calm completeness. On and on I went
With no more hope than fear of what came next,
Till lo, I push a door, sudden uplift
A hanging, enter, chance upon a shift
Indeed of scene! So — thus it is thou deck'st,
High heaven, our low earth's brick-and-mortar work?

III.

It was the Chapel. That a star, from murk
Which hid, should flashingly emerge at last,
Were small surprise: but from broad day I passed
Into a presence that turned shine to shade.
There fronted me the Rafael Mother-Maid,
Never to whom knelt votarist in shrine
By Nature's bounty helped, by Art's divine
More varied — beauty with magnificence —
Than this: from floor to roof one evidence
Of how far earth may rival heaven. No niche
Where glory was not prisoned to enrich
Man's gaze with gold and gems, no space but glowed
With color, gleamed with carving — hues which owed
Their outburst to a brush the painter fed
With rainbow-substance — rare shapes never wed
To actual flesh and blood, which, brain-born once,
Became the sculptor's dowry, Art's response
To earth's despair. And all seemed old yet new:
Youth, — in the marble's curve, the canvas' hue,
Apparent, — wanted not the crowning thrill
Of age the consecrator. Hands long still
Had worked here — could it be, what lent them skill
Retained a power to supervise, protect,
Enforce new lessons with the old, connect
Our life with theirs? No merely modern touch
Told me that here the artist, doing much,
Elsewhere did more, perchance does better, lives —
So needs must learn.

IV.

Well, these provocatives
Having fulfilled their office, forth I went
Big with anticipation — well-nigh fear —
Of what next room and next for startled eyes
Might have in store, surprise beyond surprise.
Next room and next and next — what followed here?
Why, nothing! not one object to arrest
My passage — everywhere too manifest
The previous decent null and void of best
And worst, mere ordinary right and fit,
Calm commonplace which neither missed, nor hit
Inch-high, inch-low, the placid mark proposed.

V.

Armed with this instance, have I diagnosed

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Your case, my Christopher? The man was sound
And sane at starting: all at once the ground
Gave way beneath his step, a certain smoke
Curled up and caught him, or perhaps down broke
A fireball wrapping flesh and spirit both
In conflagration. Then — as heaven were loth
To linger — let earth understand too well
How heaven at need can operate — off fell
The flame-robe, and the untransfigured man
Resumed sobriety, — as he began,
So did he end nor alter pace, not he!

VI.

Now, what I fain would know is — could it be
That he — whoe'er he was that furnished forth
The Chapel, making thus, from South to North,
Rafael touch Leighton, Michelagnolo
Join Watts, was found but once combining so
The elder and the younger, taking stand
On Art's supreme, — or that yourself who sang
A Song where flute-breath silvers trumpet-clang,
And stations you for once on either hand
With Milton and with Keats, empowered to claim
Affinity on just one point — (or blame
Or praise my judgment, thus it fronts you full) —
How came it you resume the void and null,
Subside to insignificance, — live, die
— Proved plainly two mere mortals who drew nigh
One moment — that, to Art's best hierarchy,
This, to the superhuman poet-pair?
What if, in one point only, then and there
The otherwise all-unapproachable
Allowed impingement? Does the sphere pretend
To span the cube's breadth, cover end to end
The plane with its embrace? No, surely! Still,
Contact is contact, sphere's touch no whit less
Than cube's superimposure. Such success
Befell Smart only out of throngs between
Milton and Keats that donned the singing-dress —
Smart, solely of such songmen, pierced the screen
'Twixt thing and word, lit language straight from soul, —
Left no fine film-flake on the naked coal
Live from the censer — shapely or uncouth,
Fire-suffused through and through, one blaze of truth
Undeadened by a lie, — (you have my mind) —
For, think! this blaze outleapt with black behind

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And blank before, when Hayley and the rest . . .
But let the dead successors worst and best
Bury their dead: with life be my concern —
Yours with the fire-flame: what I fain would learn
Is just — (suppose me haply ignorant
Down to the common knowledge, doctors vaunt)
Just this — why only once the fire-flame was:
No matter if the marvel came to pass
The way folk judged — if power too long suppressed
Broke loose and maddened, as the vulgar guessed,
Or simply brain-disorder (doctors said),
A turmoil of the particles disturbed,
Brain's workaday performance in your head,
Spurred spirit to wild action health had curbed,
And so verse issued in a cataract
Whence prose, before and after, unperturbed
Was wont to wend its way. Concede the fact
That here a poet was who always could —
Never before did — never after would —
Achieve the feat: how were such fact explained?

VII.

Was it that when, by rarest chance, there fell
Disguise from Nature, so that Truth remained
Naked, and whoso saw for once could tell
Us others of her majesty and might
In large, her lovelinesses infinite
In little, — straight you used the power wherewith
Sense, penetrating as through rind to pith
Each object, thoroughly revealed might view
And comprehend the old things thus made new,
So that while eye saw, soul to tongue could trust
Thing which struck word out, and once more adjust
Real vision to right language, till heaven's vault
Pompous with sunset, storm-stirred sea's assault
On the swilled rock-ridge, earth's embosomed brood
Of tree and flower and weed, with all the life
That flies or swims or crawls, in peace or strife,
Above, below, — each had its note and name
For Man to know by, — Man who, now — the same
As erst in Eden, needs that all he sees
Be named him ere he note by what degrees
Of strength and beauty to its end Design
Ever thus operates — (your thought and mine,
No matter for the many dissident) —
So did you sing your Song, so truth found vent
In words for once with you?

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VIII.

Then — back was furled
The robe thus thrown aside, and straight the world
Darkened into the old oft-catalogued
Repository of things that sky, wave, land,
Or show or hide, clear late, accretion-clogged
Now, just as long ago, by tellings and
Retellings to satiety, which strike
Muffled upon the ear's drum. Very like
None was so startled as yourself when friends
Came, hailed your fast-returning wits: "Health mends
Importantly, for — to be plain with you —
This scribble on the wall was done — in lieu
Of pen and paper — with — ha, ha! — your key
Denting it on the wainscot! Do you see
How wise our caution was? Thus much we stopped
Of babble that had else grown print: and lopped
From your trim bay-tree this unsightly bough —
Smart's who translated Horace! Write us now" . . .
Why, what Smart did write — never afterward
One line to show that he, who paced the sward,
Had reached the zenith from his madhouse cell.

IX.

Was it because you judged (I know full well
You never had the fancy) — judged — as some —
That who makes poetry must reproduce
Thus ever and thus only, as they come,
Each strength, each beauty, everywhere diffuse
Throughout creation, so that eye and ear,
Seeing and hearing, straight shall recognize,
At touch of just a trait, the strength appear, —
Suggested by a line's lapse see arise
All evident the beauty, — fresh surprise
Startling at fresh achievement? "So, indeed,
Wallows the whale's bulk in the waste of brine,
Nor otherwise its feather-tufts make fine
Wild Virgin's Bower when stars faint off to seed!"
(My prose — your poetry I dare not give,
Purpling too much my mere gray argument.)
— Was it because you judged — when fugitive
Was glory found, and wholly gone and spent
Such power of startling up deaf ear, blind eye,
At truth's appearance, — that you humbly bent
The head and, bidding vivid work good-by,

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Doffed lyric dress and trod the world once more
A drab-clothed decent proseman as before?
Strengths, beauties, by one word's flash thus laid bare
— That was effectual service: made aware
Of strengths and beauties, Man but hears the text,
Awaits your teaching. Nature? What comes next?
Why all the strength and beauty? — to be shown
Thus in one word's flash, thenceforth let alone
By Man who needs must deal with aught that 's known
Never so lately and so little? Friend,
First give us knowledge, then appoint its use!
Strength, beauty are the means: ignore their end?
As well you stopped at proving how profuse
Stones, sticks, nay stubble lie to left and right
Ready to help the builder, — careless quite
If he should take, or leave the same to strew
Earth idly, — as by word's flash bring in view
Strength, beauty, then bid who beholds the same
Go on beholding. Why gains unemployed?
Nature was made to be by Man enjoyed
First; followed duly by enjoyment's fruit,
Instruction — haply leaving joy behind:
And you, the instructor, would you slack pursuit
Of the main prize, as poet help mankind
Just to enjoy, there leave them? Play the fool,
Abjuring a superior privilege?
Please simply when your function is to rule —
By thought incite to deed? From edge to edge
Of earth's round, strength and beauty everywhere
Pullulate — and must you particularize
All, each and every apparition? Spare
Yourself and us the trouble! Ears and eyes
Want so much strength and beauty, and no less
Nor more, to learn life's lesson by. Oh, yes —
The other method 's favored in our day!
The end ere the beginning: as you may
Master the heavens before you study earth,
Make you familiar with the meteor's birth
Ere you descend to scrutinize the rose!
I say, o'erstep no least one of the rows
That lead man from the bottom where he plants
Foot first of all, to life's last ladder-top:
Arrived there, vain enough will seem the vaunts
Of those who say — "We scale the skies, then drop
To earth — to find, how all things there are loth
To answer heavenly law: we understand

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The meteor's course, and lo, the rose's growth —
How other than should be by law's command!"
Would not you tell such — "Friends, beware lest fume
Offuscate sense: learn earth first ere presume
To teach heaven legislation. Law must be
Active in earth or nowhere: earth you see, —
Or there or not at all, Will, Power and Love
Admit discovery, — as below, above
Seek next law's confirmation! But reverse
The order, where 's the wonder things grow worse
Than, by the law your fancy formulates,
They should be? Cease from anger at the fates
Which thwart themselves so madly. Live and learn,
Not first learn and then live, is our concern.

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WITH GEORGE BUBB DODINGTON

I.

Ah, George Bubb Dodington Lord Melcombe, — no,
Yours was the wrong way! — always understand,
Supposing that permissibly you planned
How statesmanship — your trade — in outward show
Might figure as inspired by simple zeal
For serving country, king and commonweal,
(Though service tire to death the body, tease
The soul from out an o'ertasked patriot-drudge)
And yet should prove zeal's outward show agrees
In all respects — right reason being judge —
With inward care that, while the statesman spends
Body and soul thus freely for the sake
Of public good, his private welfare take
No harm by such devotedness. Intends
Scripture aught else — let captious folk enquire —
Which teaches "Laborers deserve their hire,
And who neglects his household bears the bell
Away of sinning from an infidel"?
Wiselier would fools that carp bestow a thought
How birds build nests; at outside, roughly wrought,
Twig knots with twig, loam plasters up each chink,
Leaving the inmate rudely lodged — you think?
Peep but inside! That specious rude-and-rough
Covers a domicile where downy fluff
Embeds the ease-deserving architect,
Who toiled and moiled not merely to effect
'Twixt sprig and spray a stop-gap in the teeth
Of wind and weather, guard what swung beneath
From upset only, but contrived himself
A snug interior, warm and soft and sleek.
Of what material? Oh, for that, you seek
How nature prompts each volatile! Thus — pelf
Smoothens the human mudlark's lodging, power
Demands some hardier wrappage to embrace
Robuster heart-beats: rock, not tree nor tower,

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Contents the building eagle: rook shoves close
To brother rook on branch, while crow morose
Apart keeps balance perched on topmost bough.
No sort of bird but suits his taste somehow:
Nay, Darwin tells of such as love the bower —
His bower-birds opportunely yield us yet
The lacking instance when at loss to get
A feathered parallel to what we find
The secret motor of some mighty mind
That worked such wonders — all for vanity?
Worked them to haply figure in the eye
Of intimates as first of — doers' kind?
Actors', that work in earnest sportively,
Paid by a sourish smile. How says the Sage?
Birds born to strut prepare a platform-stage
With sparkling stones and speckled shells, all sorts
Of slimy rubbish, odds and ends and orts,
Whereon to pose and posture and engage
The priceless female simper.

II.

I have gone
Thus into detail, George Bubb Dodington,
Lest, when I take you presently to task
For the wrong way of working, you should ask
"What fool conjectures that profession means
Performance? that who goes behind the scenes
Finds, — acting over, — still the soot-stuff screens
Othello's visage, still the self-same cloak's
Bugle-bright-blackness half reveals half chokes
Hamlet's emotion, as ten minutes since?
No, each resumes his garb, stands — Moor or prince —
Decently draped: just so with statesmanship!
All outside show, in short, is sham — why wince?
Concede me — while our parley lasts! You trip
Afterwards — lay but this to heart! (there lurks
Somewhere in all of us a lump which irks
Somewhat the spriteliest-scheming brain that 's bent
On brave adventure, would but heart consent!)
— Here trip you, that — your aim allowed as right —
Your means thereto were wrong. Come, we, this night,
Profess one purpose, hold one principle,
Are at odds only as to — not the will
But way of winning solace for ourselves
— No matter if the ore for which zeal delves
Be gold or coprolite, while zeal's pretence

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is — we do good to men at — whose expense
But ours? who tire the body, tease the soul,
Simply that, running, we may reach fame's goal
And wreathe at last our brows with bay — the State's
Disinterested slaves, nay — please the Fates —
Saviors and nothing less: such lot has been!
Statesmanship triumphs pedestalled, serene, —
O happy consummation! — brought about
By managing with skill the rabble-rout
For which we labor (never mind the name —
People or populace, for praise or blame)
Making them understand — their heaven, their hell,
Their every hope and fear is ours as well.
Man's cause — what other can we have at heart?
Whence follows that the necessary part
High o'er Man's head we play, — and freelier breathe
Just that the multitude which gasps beneath
May reach the level where unstifled stand
Ourselves at vantage to put forth a hand,
Assist the prostrate public. 'T is by right
Merely of such pretence, we reach the height
Where storms abound, to brave — nay, court their stress,
Though all too well aware — of pomp the less,
Of peace the more! But who are we, to spurn
For peace' sake, duty's pointing? Up, then — earn
Albeit no prize we may but martyrdom!
Now, such fit height to launch salvation from,
How get and gain? Since help must needs be craved
By would-be saviors of the else-unsaved,
How coax them to co-operate, lend a lift,
Kneel down and let us mount?

III.

You say "Make shift
By sham — the harsh word: preach and teach, persuade
Somehow the Public — not despising aid
Of salutary artifice — we seek
Solely their good: our strength would raise the weak,
Our cultivated knowledge supplement
Their rudeness, rawness: why to us were lent
Ability except to come in use?
Who loves his kind must by all means induce
That kind to let his love play freely, press
In Man's behalf to full performance!"

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IV.

Yes—
Yes, George, we know! — whereat they hear, believe,
And bend the knee, and on the neck receive
Who fawned and cringed to purpose? Not so, George!
Try simple falsehood on shrewd folk who forge
Lies of superior fashion day by day
And hour by hour? With craftsmen versed as they
What chance of competition when the tools
Only a novice wields? Are knaves such fools?
Disinterested patriots, spare your tongue
The tones thrice-silvery, cheek save smiles it flung
Pearl-like profuse to swine — a herd, whereof
No unit needs be taught, his neighbor's trough
Scarce holds for who but grunts and whines the husks
Due to a wrinkled snout that shows sharp tusks.
No animal — much less our lordly Man —
Obeys its like: with strength all rule began,
The stoutest awes the pasture. Soon succeeds
Discrimination, — nicer power Man needs
To rule him than is bred of bone and thew:
Intelligence must move strength's self. This too
Lasts but its time: the multitude at length
Looks inside for intelligence and strength
And finds them here and there to pick and choose:
"All at your service, mine, see!" Ay, but who's
My George, at this late day, to make his boast
"In strength, intelligence, I rule the roast,
Beat, all and some, the ungraced who crowd your ranks?"
"Oh, but I love, would lead you, gain your thanks
By unexampled yearning for Man's sake —
Passion that solely waits your help to take
Effect in action!" George, which one of us
But holds with his own heart communion thus:
"I am, if not of men the first and best,
Still — to receive enjoyment — properest:
Which since by force I cannot, nor by wit
Most likely — craft must serve in place of it.
Flatter, cajole! If so I bring within
My net the gains which wit and force should win,
What hinders?" 'T is a trick we know of old:
Try, George, some other of tricks manifold!
The multitude means mass and mixture — right!
Are mixtures simple, pray, or composite?
Dive into Man, your medley: see the waste!

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Sloth-stifled genius, energy disgraced
By ignorance, high aims with sorry skill,
Will without means and means in want of will
— Sure we might fish, from out the mothers' sons
That welter thus, a dozen Dodingtons!
Why call up Dodington, and none beside,
To take his seat upon our backs and ride
As statesman conquering and to conquer? Well,
The last expedient, which must needs excel
Those old ones — this it is, — at any rate
To-day's conception thus I formulate:
As simple force has been replaced, just so
Must simple wit be: men have got to know
Such wit as what you boast is nowise held
The wonder once it was, but, paralleled
Too plentifully, counts not, — puts to shame
Modest possessors like yourself who claim,
By virtue of it merely, power and place
— Which means the sweets of office. Since our race
Teems with the like of you, some special gift,
Your very own, must coax our hands to lift,
And backs to bear you: is it just and right
To privilege your nature?

v.

"State things quite
Other than so" — make answer! "I pretend
No such community with men. Perpend
My key to domination! Who would use
Man for his pleasure needs must introduce
The element that awes Man. Once for all,
His nature owns a Supernatural
In fact as well as phrase — which found must be
— Where, in this doubting age? Old mystery
Has served its turn — seen through and sent adrift
To nothingness: new wizard-craft makes shift
Nowadays shorn of help by robe and book, —
Otherwise, elsewhere, for success must look
Than chalked-ring, incantation-gibberish.
Somebody comes to conjure: that 's he? Pish!
He 's like the roomful of rapt gazers, — there 's
No sort of difference in the garb he wears
From ordinary dressing, — gesture, speech,
Deportment, just like those of all and each
That eye their master of the minute. Stay!
What of the something — call it how you may —

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Uncanny in the — quack? That 's easy said!
Notice how the Professor turns no head
And yet takes cognizance of who accepts,
Denies, is puzzled as to the adept's
Supremacy, yields up or lies in wait
To trap the trickster! Doubtless, out of date
Are dealings with the devil: yet, the stir
Of mouth, its smile half smug half sinister,
Mock-modest boldness masked in diffidence, —
What if the man have — who knows how or whence? —
Confederate potency unguessed by us —
Prove no such cheat as he pretends?"

VI.

Ay, thus
Had but my George played statesmanship's new card
That carries all! "Since we" — avers the Bard —
"All of us have one human heart" — as good
As say — by all of us is understood
Right and wrong, true and false — in rough, at least,
We own a common conscience. God, man, beast —
How should we qualify the statesman-shape
I fancy standing with our world agape?
Disguise, flee, fight against with tooth and nail
The outrageous designation! "Quack" men quail
Before? You see, a little year ago
They heard him thunder at the thing which, lo,
To-day he vaunts for unscathed, while what erst
Heaven-high he lauded, lies hell-low, accursed!
And yet where 's change? Who. awe-struck, cares to point
Critical finger at a dubious joint
In armor, true *æs triplex*, breast and back
Binding about, defiant of attack,
An imperturbability that 's — well,
Or innocence or impudence — how tell
One from the other? Could ourselves broach lies,
Yet brave mankind with those unaltered eyes,
Those lips that keep the quietude of truth?
Dare we attempt the like? What quick uncouth
Disturbance of thy smug economy,
O coward visage! Straight would all descry
Back on the man's brow the boy's blush once more!
No: he goes deeper — could our sense explore —
Finds conscience beneath conscience such as ours.
Genius is not so rare, — prodigious powers —
Well, others boast such, — but a power like this

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Mendacious intrepidity — *quid vis?*
Besides, imposture plays another game,
Admits of no diversion from its aim
Of captivating hearts, sets zeal aflare
In every shape at every turn, — nowhere
Allows subsidence into ash. By stress
Of what does guile succeed but earnestness,
Earnest word, look and gesture? Touched with aught
But earnestness, the levity were fraught
With ruin to guile's film-work. Grave is guile;
Here no act wants its qualifying smile,
Its covert pleasantry to neutralize
The outward ardor. Can our chief despise
Even while most he seems to adulate?
As who should say "What though it be my fate
To deal with fools? Among the crowd must lurk
Some few with faculty to judge my work
Spite of its way which suits, they understand,
The crass majority: — the Sacred Band,
No duping them forsooth!" So tells a touch
Of subintelligential nod and wink —
Turning foes friends. Coarse flattery moves the gorge:
Mine were the mode to awe the many, George!
They guess you half despise them while most bent
On demonstrating that your sole intent
Strives for their service. Sneer at them? Yourself
'T is you disparage, — tricksy as an elf,
Scorning what most you strain to bring to pass,
Laughingly careless, — triply cased in brass, —
While pushing strenuous to the end in view.
What follows? Why, you formulate within
The vulgar headpiece this conception: "Win
A master-mind to serve us needs we must,
One who, from motives we but take on trust,
Acts strangelier — haply wiselier than we know —
Stronglier, for certain. Did he say 'I throw
Aside my good for yours, in all I do
Care nothing for myself and all for you' —
We should both understand and disbelieve:
Said he 'Your good I laugh at in my sleeve,
My own it is I solely labor at,
Pretending yours the while' — that, even that,
We, understanding well, give credence to,
And so will none of it. But here 't is through
Our recognition of his service, wage
Well earned by work, he mounts to such a stage

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Above competitors as all save Bubb
Would agonize to keep. Yet — here 's the rub —
So slightly does he hold by our esteem
Which solely fixed him fast there, that we seem
Mocked every minute to our face, by gibe
And jest — scorn insuppressive: what ascribe
The rashness to? Our pay and praise to boot —
Do these avail him to tread underfoot
Something inside us all and each, that stands
Somehow instead of somewhat which commands
'Lie not'? Folk fear to jeopardize their soul,
Stumble at times, walk straight upon the whole, —
That 's nature's simple instinct: what may be
The portent here, the influence such as we
Are strangers to?" —

VII.

Exact the thing I call
Man's despot, just the Supernatural
Which, George, was wholly out of — far beyond
Your theory and practice. You had conned
But to reject the precept "To succeed
In gratifying selfishness and greed,
Asseverate such qualities exist
Nowise within yourself! then make acquist
By all means, with no sort of fear!" Alack,
That well-worn lie is obsolete! Fall back
On still a working pretext — "Hearth and Home,
The Altar, love of England, hate of Rome" —
That 's serviceable lying — that perchance
Had screened you decently: but 'ware advance
By one step more in perspicacity
Of these our dupes! At length they get to see
As through the earlier, this the latter plea —
And find the greed and selfishness at source!
Ventum est ad triarios: last resource
Should be to what but — exquisite disguise
Disguise-abjuring, truth that looks like lies,
Frankness so sure to meet with unbelief?
Say — you hold in contempt — not them in chief —
But first and foremost your own self! No use
In men but to make sport for you, induce
The puppets now to dance, now stand stock-still,
Now knock their heads together, at your will
For will's sake only — while each plays his part
Submissive: why? through terror at the heart:

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"Can it be — this bold man, whose hand we saw
Openly pull the wires, obeys some law
Quite above Man's — nay, God's?" On face fall they.
This was the secret missed, again I say,
Out of your power to grasp conception of,
Much less employ to purpose. Hence the scoff
That greets your very name: folks see but one
Fool more, as well as knave, in Dodington.

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WITH FRANCIS FURINI

I.

NAY, *that*, Furini, never I at least
Mean to believe! What man you were I know,
While you walked Tuscan earth, a painter-priest,
Something about two hundred years ago.
Priest — you did duty punctual as the sun
That rose and set above Saint Sano's church,
Blessing Mugello: of your flock not one
But showed a whiter fleece because of smirch,
Your kind hands wiped it clear from: were they poor?
Bounty broke bread apace, — did marriage lag
For just the want of moneys that ensure
Fit hearth-and-home provision? — straight your bag
Unplumped itself, — reached hearts by way of palms
Goodwill's shake had but tickled. All about
Mugello valley, felt some parish qualms
At worship offered in bare walls without
The comfort of a picture? — prompt such need
Our painter would supply, and throngs to see
Witnessed that goodness — no unholy greed
Of gain — had coaxed from Don Furini — he
Whom princes might in vain implore to toil
For worldly profit — such a masterpiece.
Brief — priest, you poured profuse God's wine and oil
Praiseworthily, I know: shall praising cease
When, priestly vesture put aside, mere man,
You stand for judgment? Rather — what acclaim
— "Good son, good brother, friend in whom we scan
No fault nor flaw" — salutes Furini's name,
The loving as the liberal! Enough:
Only to ope a lily, though for sake
Of setting free its scent, disturbs the rough
Loose gold about its anther. I shall take
No blame in one more blazon, last of all —
Good painter were you: if in very deed
I styled you great — what modern art dares call

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My word in question? Let who will take heed
Of what he seeks and misses in your brain
To balance that precision of the brush
Your hand could ply so deftly: all in vain
Strives poet's power for outlet when the push
Is lost upon a barred and bolted gate
Of painter's impotency. Agnolo —
Thine were alike the head and hand, by fate
Doubly endowed! Who boasts head only — woe
To hand's presumption should brush emulate
Fancy's free passage by the pen, and show
Thought wrecked and ruined where the inexpert
Foolhardy fingers half grasped, half let go
Film-wings the poet's pen arrests unhurt!
No — painter such as that miraculous
Michael, who deems you? But the ample gift
Of gracing walls else blank of this our house
Of life with imagery, one bright drift
Poured forth by pencil, — man and woman mere,
Glorified till half owned for gods, — the dear
Fleshly perfection of the human shape, —
This was apportioned you whereby to praise
Heaven and bless earth. Who clumsily essays,
By slighting painter's craft, to prove the ape
Of poet's pen-creation, just betrays
Twofold ineptitude.

II.

By such sure ways
Do I return, Furini, to my first
And central confidence — that he I proved
Good priest, good man, good painter, and rehearsed
Praise upon praise to show — not simply loved
For virtue, but for wisdom honored too
Needs must Furini be, — it follows — who
Shall undertake to breed in me belief
That, on his death-bed, weakness played the thief
With wisdom, folly ousted reason quite?
List to the chronicler! With main and might —
So fame runs — did the poor soul beg his friends
To buy and burn his hand-work, make amends
For having reproduced therein — (Ah, me!
Sighs fame — that 's friend Filippo) — nudity!
Yes, I assure you: he would paint — not men
Merely — a pardonable fault — but when
He had to deal with — Oh, not mother Eve

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Alone, permissibly in Paradise
Naked and unashamed, — but dared achieve
Dreadful distinction, at soul-safety's price,
By also painting women — (why the need?)
Just as God made them: there, you have the truth!
Yes, rosed from top to toe in flush of youth,
One foot upon the moss-fringe, would some Nymph
Try, with its venturous fellow, if the lymph
Were chillier than the slab-stepped fountain-edge;
The while a-heap her garments on its ledge
Of boulder lay within hand's easy reach,
— No one least kid-skin cast around her! Speech
Shrinks from enumerating case and case
Of — were it but Diana at the chase,
With tunic tucked discreetly hunting-high!
No, some Queen Venus set our necks awry,
Turned faces from the painter's all-too-frank
Triumph of flesh! For — whom had he to thank
— This self-appointed nature-student? Whence
Picked he up practice? By what evidence
Did he unhandsomely become adept
In simulating bodies? How except
By actual sight of such? Himself confessed
The enormity: quoth Philip "When I pressed
The painter to acknowledge his abuse
Of artistry else potent — what excuse
Made the infatuated man? I give
His very words: 'Did you but know, as I,
— O scruple-splitting sickly-sensitive
Mild-moral-monger, what the agony
Of Art is ere Art satisfy herself
In imitating Nature — (Man, poor elf,
Striving to match the finger-mark of Him
The immeasurably matchless) — gay or grim,
Pray, would your smile be? Leave mere fools to tax
Art's high-strung brain's intentness as so lax
That, in its mid-throe, idle fancy sees
The moment for admittance!' Pleadings these —
Specious, I grant." So adds, and seems to wince
Somewhat, our censor — but shall truth convince
Blockheads like Baldinucci?

III.

I resume
My incredulity: your other kind
Of soul, Furini, never was so blind,

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Evén through death-mist, as to grope in gloom
For cheer beside a bonfire piled to turn
Ashes and dust all that your noble life
Did homage to life's Lord by, — bid them burn
— These Baldinucci blockheads — pictures rife
With record, in each rendered loveliness,
That one appreciative creature's debt
Of thanks to the Creator, more or less,
Was paid according as heart's-will had met
Hand's-power in Art's endeavor to express
Heaven's most consummate of achievements, bless
Earth by a semblance of the seal God set
On woman his supremest work. I trust
Rather, Furini, dying breath had vent
In some fine fervor of thanksgiving just
For this — that soul and body's power you spent —
Agonized to adumbrate, trace in dust
That marvel which we dream the firmament
Copies in star-device when fancies stray
Outlining, orb by orb, Andromeda —
God's best of beauteous and magnificent
Revealed to earth — the naked female form.
Nay, I mistake not: wrath that 's but lukewarm
Would boil indeed were such a critic styled
Himself an artist: artist! Ossa piled
Topping Olympus — the absurd which crowns
The extravagant — whereat one laughs, not frowns.
Paints he? One bids the poor pretender take
His sorry self, a trouble and disgrace,
From out the sacred presence, void the place
Artists claim only. What — not merely wake
Our pity that suppressed concupiscence —
A satyr masked as matron — makes pretence
To the coarse blue-fly's instinct — can perceive
No better reason why she should exist —
— God's lily-limbed and blush-rose-bosomed Eve —
Than as a hot-bed for the sensualist
To fly-blow with his fancies, make pure stuff
Breed him back filth — this were not crime enough?
But further — fly to style itself — nay, more —
To steal among the sacred ones, crouch down
Though but to where their garments sweep the floor —
— Still catching some faint sparkle from the crown
Crowning transcendent Michael, Leonard,
Rafael, — to sit beside the feet of such,
Unspurned because unnoticed, then reward

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Their toleration — mercy overmuch —
By stealing from the throne-step to the fools
Curious outside the gateway, all-agape
To learn by what procedure, in the schools
Of Art, a merest man in outward shape
May learn to be Correggio! Old and young,
These learners got their lesson: Art was just
A safety-screen — (Art, which Correggio's tongue
Calls "Virtue") — for a skulking vice: mere lust
Inspired the artist when his Night and Morn
Slept and awoke in marble on that edge
Of heaven above our awe-struck earth: lust-born
His Eve low bending took the privilege
Of life from what our eyes saw — God's own palm
That put the flame forth — to the love and thanks
Of all creation save this recreant!

IV.

Calm
Our phrase, Furini! Not the artist-ranks
Claim riddance of an interloper: no —
This Baldinucci did but grunt and sniff
Outside Art's pale — ay, grubbed, where pine-trees grow,
For pignuts only.

V.

You the Sacred! If
Indeed on you has been bestowed the dower
Of Art in fulness, graced with head and hand,
Head — to look up not downwards, hand — of power
To make head's gain the portion of a world
Where else the uninstructed ones too sure
Would take all outside beauty — film that 's furled
About a star — for the star's self, endure
No guidance to the central glory, — nay,
(Sadder) might apprehend the film was fog,
Or (worst) wish all but vapor well away,
And sky's pure product thickened from earth's bog —
Since so, nor seldom, have your worthiest failed
To trust their own soul's insight — why? except
For warning that the head of the adept
May too much prize the hand, work unassailed
By scruple of the better sense that finds
An orb within each halo, bids gross flesh
Free the fine spirit-pattern, nor enmesh
More than is meet a marvel, custom blinds
Only the vulgar eye to. Now, less fear

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That you, the foremost of Art's fellowship,
Will oft — will ever so offend! But — hip
And thigh — smite the Philistine! *You* — slunk here —
Connived at, by too easy tolerance,
Not to scrape palette simply or squeeze brush,
But dub your very self an Artist? Tush —
You, of the daubings, is it, dare advance
This doctrine that the Artist-mind must needs
Own to affinity with yours — confess
Provocative acquaintance, more or less,
With each impurely-peevish worm that breeds
Inside your brain's receptacle?

VI.

Enough.
Who owns "I dare not look on diadems
Without an itch to pick out, purloin gems
Others contentedly leave sparkling" — gruff
Answers the guard of the regalia: "Why —
Consciously kleptomaniac — thrust yourself
Where your illicit craving after pelf
Is tempted most — in the King's treasury?
Go elsewhere! Sort with thieves, if thus you feel —
When folk clean-handed simply recognize
Treasure whereof the mere sight satisfies —
But straight your fingers are on itch to steal!
Hence with you!"
Pray, Furini!

VII.

"Bounteous God,
Deviser and dispenser of all gifts
To soul through sense, — in Art the soul uplifts!
Man's best of thanks! What but Thy measuring-rod
Meted forth heaven and earth? more intimate,
Thy very hands were busied with the task
Of making, in this human shape, a mask —
A match for that divine. Shall love abate
Man's wonder? Nowise! True — true — all too true —
No gift but, in the very plenitude
Of its perfection, goes maimed, misconstrued
By wickedness or weakness: still, some few
Have grace to see Thy purpose, strength to mar
Thy work by no admixture of their own,
— Limn truth not falsehood, bid us love alone
The type untampered with, the naked star!"

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VIII.

And, prayer done, painter — what if you should preach?
Not as of old when playing pulpiteer
To simple-witted country folk, but here
In actual London try your powers of speech
On us the cultured, therefore sceptical —
What would you? For, suppose he has his word
In faith's behalf, no matter how absurd,
This painter-theologian? One and all
We lend an ear — nay, Science takes thereto —
Encourages the meanest who has racked
Nature until he gains from her some fact,
To state what truth is from his point of view,
Mere pin-point though it be: since many such
Conduce to make a whole, she bids our friend
Come forward unabashed and haply lend
His little life-experience to our much
Of modern knowledge. Since she so insists,
Up stands Furini.

IX.

"Evolutionists!
At truth I glimpse from depths, you glance from heights,
Our stations for discovery opposites, —
How should ensue agreement? I explain:
'T is the tip-top of things to which you strain
Your vision, until atoms, protoplasm,
And what and whence and how may be the spasm
Which sets all going, stop you: down perforce
Needs must your observation take its course,
Since there 's no moving upwards: link by link
You drop to where the atoms somehow think,
Feel, know themselves to be: the world 's begun,
Such as we recognize it. Have you done
Descending? Here 's ourself, — Man, known to-day,
Duly evolved at last, — so far, you say,
The sum and seal of being's progress. Good!
Thus much at least is clearly understood —
Of power does Man possess no particle:
Of knowledge — just so much as shows that still
It ends in ignorance on every side:
But righteousness — ah, Man is deified
Thereby, for compensation! Make survey
Of Man's surroundings, try creation — nay,
Try emulation of the minimized
Minuteness fancy may conceive! Surprised

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Reason becomes by two defeats for one —
Not only power at each phenomenon
Baffled, but knowledge also in default —
Asking what *is* minuteness — yonder vault
Speckled with suns, or this the millionth — thing,
How shall I call? — that on some insect's wing
Helps to make out in dyes the mimic star?
Weak, ignorant, accordingly we are:
What then? The worse for Nature! Where began
Righteousness, moral sense except in Man?
True, he makes nothing, understands no whit:
Had the initiator-spasm seen fit
Thus doubly to endow him, none the worse
And much the better were the universe.
What does Man see or feel or apprehend
Here, there, and everywhere, but faults to mend,
Omissions to supply, — one wide disease
Of things that are, which Man at once would ease
Had will but power and knowledge? failing both —
Things must take will for deed — Man, nowise loth,
Accepts pre-eminency: mere blind force —
Mere knowledge undirected in its course
By any care for what is made or marred
In either's operation — *these* award
The crown to? Rather let it deck thy brows,
Man, whom alone a righteousness endows
Would cure the wide world's ailing! Who disputes
Thy claim thereto? Had Spasm more attributes
Than power and knowledge in its gift, before
Man came to pass? The higher that we soar,
The less of moral sense like Man's we find:
No sign of such before, — what comes behind,
Who guesses? But until there crown our sight
The quite new — not the old mere infinite
Of changings, — some fresh kind of sun and moon, —
Then, not before, shall I expect a boon
Of intuition just as strange, which turns
Evil to good, and wrong to right, unlearns
All Man's experience learned since Man was he.
Accept in Man, advanced to this degree,
The Prime Mind, therefore! neither wise nor strong —
Whose fault? but were he both, then right, not wrong
As now, throughout the world were paramount
According to his will, — which I account
The qualifying faculty. He stands
Confessed supreme — the monarch whose commands

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Could he enforce, how bettered were the world!
He 's at the height this moment — to be hurled
Next moment to the bottom by rebound
Of his own peal of laughter. All around
Ignorance wraps him, — whence and how and why
Things are, — yet cloud breaks and lets blink the sky
Just overhead, not elsewhere! What assures
His optics that the very blue which lures
Comes not of black outside it, doubly dense?
Ignorance overwraps his moral sense,
Winds him about, relaxing, as it wraps,
So much and no more than lets through perhaps
The murmured knowledge — 'Ignorance exists.'

X.

"I at the bottom, Evolutionists,
Advise beginning, rather. I profess
To know just one fact — my self-consciousness, —
'Twixt ignorance and ignorance enisled, —
Knowledge: before me was my Cause — that 's styled
God: after, in due course succeeds the rest, —
All that my knowledge comprehends — at best —
At worst, conceives about in mild despair.
Light needs must touch on either darkness: where?
Knowledge so far impinges on the Cause
Before me, that I know — by certain laws
Wholly unknown, whate'er I apprehend
Within, without me, had its rise: thus blend
I, and all things perceived, in one Effect.
How far can knowledge any ray project
On what comes after me — the universe?
Well, my attempt to make the cloud disperse
Begins — not from above but underneath:
I climb, you soar, — who soars soon loses breath
And sinks, who climbs keeps one foot firm on fact
Ere hazarding the next step: soul's first act
(Call consciousness the soul — some name we need)
Getting itself aware, through stuff decreed
Thereto (so call the body) — who has stept
So far, there let him stand, become adept
In body ere he shift his station thence
One single hair's breadth. Do I make pretence
To teach, myself unskilled in learning? Lo,
My life's work! Let my pictures prove I know
Somewhat of what this fleshly frame of ours
Or is or should be, how the soul empowers

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The body to reveal its every mood
Of love and hate, pour forth its plenitude
Of passion. If my hand attained to give
Thus permanence to truth else fugitive,
Did not I also fix each fleeting grace
Of form and feature — save the beauteous face —
Arrest decay in transitory might
Of bone and muscle — cause the world to bless
Forever each transcendent nakedness
Of man and woman? Were such feats achieved
By sloth, or strenuous labor unrelieved,
— Yet lavished vainly? Ask that underground
(So may I speak) of all on surface found
Of flesh-perfection! Depths on depths to probe
Of all-inventive artifice, disrobe
Marvel at hiding under marvel, pluck
Veil after veil from Nature — were the luck
Ours to surprise the secret men so name,
That still eludes the searcher — all the same,
Repays his search with still fresh proof — 'Externe,
Not inmost, is the Cause, fool! Look and learn!'
Thus teach my hundred pictures: firm and fast
There did I plant my first foot. And the next?
Nowhere! 'T was put forth and withdrawn, perplexed
At touch of what seemed stable and proved stuff
Such as the colored clouds are: plain enough
There lay the outside universe: try Man —
My most immediate! and the dip began
From safe and solid into that profound
Of ignorance I tell you surges round
My rock-spit of self-knowledge. Well and ill,
Evil and good irreconcilable
Above, beneath, about my every side, —
How did this wild confusion far and wide
Tally with my experience when my stamp —
So far from stirring — struck out, each a lamp,
Spark after spark of truth from where I stood —
Pedestalled triumph? Evil there was good,
Want was the promise of supply, defect
Ensured completion, — where and when and how?
Leave that to the First Cause! Enough that now,
Here where I stand, this moment 's me and mine,
Shows me what is, permits me to divine
What shall be. Wherefore? Nay, how otherwise?
Look at my pictures! What so glorifies
The body that the permeating soul

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Finds there no particle elude control
Direct, or fail of duty, — most obscure
When most subservient? Did that Cause ensure
The soul such raptures as its fancy stings
Body to furnish when, uplift by wings
Of passion, here and now, it leaves the earth,
Loses itself above, where bliss has birth —
(Heaven, be the phrase) — did that same Cause contrive
Such solace for the body, soul must dive
At drop of fancy's pinion, condescend
To bury both alike on earth, our friend
And fellow, where minutely exquisite
Low lie the pleasures, now and here — no herb
But hides its marvel, peace no doubts perturb
In each small mystery of insect life —
— Shall the soul's Cause thus gift the soul, yet strife
Continue still of fears with hopes, — for why?
What if the Cause, whereof we now descry
So far the wonder-working, lack at last
Will, power, benevolence — a protoplast,
No consummator, sealing up the sum
Of all things, — past and present and to come —
Perfection? No, I have no doubt at all!
There 's my amount of knowledge — great or small,
Sufficient for my needs: for see! advance
Its light now on that depth of ignorance
I shrank before from — yonder where the world
Lies wreck-strewn, — evil towering, prone good — hurled
From pride of place, on every side. For me
(Patience, beseech you!) knowledge can but be
Of good by knowledge of good's opposite —
Evil, — since, to distinguish wrong from right,
Both must be known in each extreme, beside —
(Or what means knowledge — to aspire or bide
Content with half-attaining? Hardly so!)
Made to know on, know ever, I must know
All to be known at any halting-stage
Of my soul's progress, such as earth, where wage
War, just for soul's instruction, pain with joy,
Folly with wisdom, all that works annoy
With all that quiets and contents, — in brief,
Good strives with evil.

Now then for relief,
Friends, of your patience kindly curbed so long.
'What?' snarl you; 'is the fool's conceit thus strong —
Must the whole outside world in soul and sense

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Suffer, that he grow sage at its expense?'
By no means! 'T is by merest touch of toe
I try — not trench on — ignorance, just know —
And so keep steady footing: how you fare,
Caught in the whirlpool — that 's the Cause's care,
Strong, wise, good, — this I know at any rate
In my own self, — but how may operate
With you — strength, wisdom, goodness — no least bli
Of knowledge breaks the darkness round me. Think!
Could I see plain, be somehow certified
All was illusion, — evil far and wide
Was good disguised, — why, out with one huge wipe
Goes knowledge from me. Type needs antitype:
As night needs day, as shine needs shade, so good
Needs evil: how were pity understood
Unless by pain? Make evident that pain
Permissibly masks pleasure — you abstain
From outstretch of the finger-tip that saves
A drowning fly. Who proffers help of hand
To weak Andromeda exposed on strand
At mercy of the monster? Were all true,
Help were not wanting: 'But 't is false,' cry you,
'Mere fancy-work of paint and brush!' No less,
Were mine the skill, the magic, to impress
Beholders with a confidence they saw
Life, — veritable flesh and blood in awe
Of just as true a sea-beast, — would they stare
Simply as now, or cry out, curse and swear,
Or call the gods to help, or catch up stick
And stone, according as their hearts were quick
Or sluggish? Well, some old artificer
Could do as much, — at least, so books aver, —
Able to make-believe, while I, poor wight,
Make-fancy, nothing more. Though wrong were right,
Could we but know — still wrong must needs seem wrong
To do right's service, prove men weak or strong,
Choosers of evil or of good. 'No such
Illusion possible!' Ah, friends, you touch
Just here my solid standing-place amid
The wash and welter, whence all doubts are bid
Back to the ledge they break against in foam,
Futility: my soul, and my soul's home
This body, — how each operates on each,
And how things outside, fact or feigning, teach
What good is and what evil, — just the same,
Be feigning or be fact the teacher, — blame

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Diffidence nowise if, from this I judge
My point of vantage, not an inch I budge.
All — for myself — seems ordered wise and well
Inside it, — what reigns outside, who can tell?
Contrariwise, who needs be told 'The space
Which yields thee knowledge, — do its bounds embrace
Well-willing and wise-working, each at height?
Enough: beyond thee lies the infinite —
Back to thy circumscription!'
Back indeed!
Ending where I began — thus: retrocede,
Who will, — what comes first, take first, I advise!
Acquaint you with the body ere your eyes
Look upward: this Andromeda of mine —
Gaze on the beauty, Art hangs out for sign
There 's finer entertainment underneath.
Learn how they ministrate to life and death —
Those incommensurably marvellous
Contrivances which furnish forth the house
Where soul has sway! Though Master keep aloof,
Signs of His presence multiply from roof
To basement of the building. Look around,
Learn thoroughly, — no fear that you confound
Master with messuage! He 's away, no doubt,
But what if, all at once, you come upon
A startling proof — not that the Master gone
Was present lately — but that something — whence
Light comes — has pushed Him into residence?
Was such the symbol's meaning, — old, uncouth —
That circle of the serpent, tail in mouth?
Only by looking low, ere looking high,
Comes penetration of the mystery."

XI.

Thanks! After sermonizing, psalmody!
Now praise with pencil, Painter! Fools attaint
Your fame, forsooth, because its power inclines
To livelier colors, more attractive lines
Than suit some orthodox sad sickly saint
— Gray male emaciation, haply streaked
Carmine by scourgings — or they want, far worse —
Some self-scathed woman, framed to bless not curse
Nature that loved the form whereon hate wreaked
The wrongs you see. No, rather paint some full
Benignancy, the first and foremost boon
Of youth, health, strength, — show beauty's May, ere June

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Undo the bud's blush, leave a rose to cull
— No poppy, neither! yet less perfect-pure,
Divinely-precious with life's dew besprent.
Show saintliness that 's simply innocent
Of guessing sinnership exists to cure
All in good time! In time let age advance
And teach that knowledge helps — not ignorance —
The healing of the nations. Let my spark
Quicken your tinder! Burn with — Joan of Arc!
Not at the end, nor midway when there grew
The brave delusions, when rare fancies flew
Before the eyes, and in the ears of her
Strange voices woke imperiously astir:
No, — paint the peasant girl all peasant-like,
Spirit and flesh — the hour about to strike
When this should be transfigured, that inflamed,
By heart's admonishing "Thy country shamed,
Thy king shut out of all his realm except
One sorry corner!" and to life forth leapt
The indubitable lightning "Can there be
Country and king's salvation — all through me?"
Memorize that burst's moment, Francis! Tush —
None of the nonsense-writing! Fitlier brush
Shall clear off fancy's film-work and let show
Not what the foolish feign but the wise know —
Ask Sainte-Beuve else! — or better, Quicherat,
The downright-digger into truth that 's — Bah,
Bettered by fiction? Well, of fact thus much
Concerns you, that "of prudishness no touch
From first to last defaced the maid; anon,
Camp-use compelling" — what says D'Alençon
Her fast friend? — "though I saw while she undressed
How fair she was — especially her breast —
Never had I a wild thought!" — as indeed
I nowise doubt. Much less would she take heed —
When eve came, and the lake, the hills around
Were all one solitude and silence, — found
Barriered impenetrably safe about, —
Take heed of interloping eyes shut out,
But quietly permit the air imbibe
Her naked beauty till . . . but hear the scribe!
Now as she fain would bathe, one even-tide,
God's maid, this Joan, from the pool's edge she spied
The fair blue bird clowns call the Fisher-king:
And "'Las, sighed she, my Liege is such a thing
As thou, lord but of one poor lonely place

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Out of his whole wide France : were mine the grace
To set my Dauphin free as thou, blue bird !"
Properly Martin-fisher — that 's the word,
Not yours nor mine : folks said the rustic oath
In common use with her was — "By my troth ?"
No, — "By my Martin" ! Paint this ! Only, turn
Her face away — that face about to burn
Into an angel's when the time is ripe !
That task 's beyond you. Finished, Francis ? Wipe
Pencil, scrape palette, and retire content !
"*Omnia non omnibus*" — no harm is meant !

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WITH GERARD DE LAIRESSE

I.

Ah, but — because you were struck blind, could bless
Your sense no longer with the actual view
Of man and woman, those fair forms you drew
In happier days so duteously and true, —
Must I account my Gerard de Lairesse
All sorrow-smitten? He was hindered too
— Was this no hardship? — from producing, plain
To us who still have eyes, the pageantry
Which passed and passed before his busy brain
And, captured on his canvas, showed our sky
Traversed by flying shapes, earth stocked with brood
Of monsters, — centaurs bestial, satyrs lewd, —
Not without much Olympian glory, shapes
Of god and goddess in their gay escapes
From the severe serene: or haply paced
The antique ways, god-counselled, nymph-embraced,
Some early human kingly personage.
Such wonders of the teeming poet's-age
Were still to be: nay, these indeed began —
Are not the pictures extant? — till the ban
Of blindness struck both palette from his thumb
And pencil from his finger.

II.

Blind — not dumb,
Else, Gerard, were my inmost bowels stirred
With pity beyond pity: no, the word
Was left upon your unmolested lips:
Your mouth unsealed, despite of eyes' eclipse,
Talked all brain's yearning into birth. I lack
Somehow the heart to wish your practice back
Which boasted hand's achievement in a score
Of veritable pictures, less or more,
Still to be seen: myself have seen them, — moved
To pay due homage to the man I loved
Because of that prodigious book he wrote

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On Artistry's Ideal, by taking note,
Making acquaintance with his artist-work.
So my youth's piety obtained success
Of all-too dubious sort: for, though it irk
To tell the issue, few or none would guess
From extant lines and colors, De Lairesse,
Your faculty, although each deftly-grouped
And aptly-ordered figure-piece was judged
Worthy a prince's purchase in its day.
Bearded experience bears not to be duped
Like boyish fancy: 't was a boy that budged
No foot's breadth from your visioned steps away
The while that memorable "Walk" he trudged
In your companionship, — the Book must say
Where, when and whither, — "Walk," come what come may
No measurer of steps on this our globe
Shall ever match for marvels. Faustus' robe,
And Fortunatus' cap were gifts of price:
But — oh, your piece of sober sound advice
That artists should descry abundant worth
In trivial commonplace, nor groan at dearth
If fortune bade the painter's craft be plied
In vulgar town and country! Why despond
Because hemmed round by Dutch canals? Beyond
The ugly actual, lo, on every side
Imagination's limitless domain
Displayed a wealth of wondrous sounds and sights
Ripe to be realized by poet's brain
Acting on painter's brush! "Ye doubt? Poor wights,
What if I set example, go before,
While you come after, and we both explore
Holland turned Dreamland, taking care to note
Objects whereto my pupils may devote
Attention with advantage?"

III.

So commenced
That "Walk" amid true wonders — none to you,
But huge to us ignobly common-sensed,
Purblind, while plain could proper optics view
In that old sepulchre by lightning split,
Whereof the lid bore carven, — any dolt
Imagines why, — Jove's very thunderbolt:
You who could straight perceive, by glance at it,
This tomb must needs be Phaeton's! In a trice,
Confirming that conjecture, close on hand,

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Behold, half out, half in the ploughed-up sand,
A chariot-wheel explained its bolt-device:
What other than the Chariot of the Sun
Ever let drop the like? Consult the tome * —
I bid inglorious tarriers-at-home —
For greater still surprise the while that "Walk"
Went on and on, to end as it begun,
Chokefull of chances, changes, every one
No whit less wondrous. What was there to balk
Us, who had eyes, from seeing? You with none
Missed not a marvel: wherefore? Let us talk.

IV.

Say am I right? Your sealed sense moved your mind,
Free from obstruction, to compassionate
Art's power left powerless, and supply the blind
With fancies worth all facts denied by fate.
Mind could invent things, add to — take away,
At pleasure, leave out trifles mean and base
Which vex the sight that cannot say them nay
But, where mind plays the master, have no place.
And bent on banishing was mind, be sure,
All except beauty from its mustered tribe
Of objects apparitional which lure
Painter to show and poet to describe —
That imagery of the antique song
Truer than truth's self. Fancy's rainbow-birth
Conceived 'mid clouds in Greece, could glance along
Your passage o'er Dutch veritable earth,
As with ourselves, who see, familiar throng
About our pacings men and women worth
Nowise a glance — so poets apprehend —
Since nought avails portraying them in verse:
While painters turn upon the heel, intend
To spare their work the critic's ready curse
Due to the daily and undignified.

V.

I who myself contentedly abide
Awake, nor want the wings of dream, — who tramp
Earth's common surface, rough, smooth, dry or damp,
— I understand alternatives, no less
Conceive your soul's leap, Gerard de Lairesse!
How were it could I mingle false with true,

* *The Art of Painting, etc.*, by Gerard de Lairesse; translated by C. F. Fritsch. 1778.

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Boast, with the sights I see, your vision too?
Advantage would it prove or detriment
If I saw double? Could I gaze intent
On Dryope plucking the blossoms red,
As you, whereat her lote-tree writhed and bled,
Yet lose no gain, no hard fast wide-awake
Having and holding nature for the sake
Of nature only — nymph and lote-tree thus
Gained by the loss of fruit not fabulous,
Apple of English homesteads, where I see
Nor seek more than crisp buds a struggling bee
Uncrumples, caught by sweet he clambers through?
Truly, a moot point: make it plain to me,
Who, bee-like, sate sense with the simply true,
Nor seek to heighten that sufficiency
By help of feignings proper to the page —
Earth's surface-blank whereon the elder age
Put color, poetizing — poured rich life
On what were else a dead ground — nothingness —
Until the solitary world grew rife
With Joves and Junos, nymphs and satyrs. Yes,
The reason was, fancy composed the strife
'Twixt sense and soul: for sense, my De Lairesse,
Cannot content itself with outward things,
Mere beauty: soul must needs know whence there springs
How, when and why — what sense but loves, nor lists
To know at all.

VI.

Not one of man's acquists
Ought he resignedly to lose, methinks:
So, point me out which was it of the links
Snapt first, from out the chain which used to bind
Our earth to heaven, and yet for you, since blind,
Subsisted still efficient and intact?
Oh, we can fancy too! but somehow fact
Has got to — say, not so much push aside
Fancy, as to declare its place supplied
By fact unseen but no less fact the same,
Which mind bids sense accept. Is mind to blame,
Or sense, — does that usurp, this abdicate?
First of all, as you "walked" — were it too late
For us to walk, if so we willed? Confess
We have the sober feet still, De Lairesse!
Why not the freakish brain too, that must needs
Supplement nature — not see flowers and weeds

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Simply as such, but link with each and all
The ultimate perfection — what we call
Rightly enough the human shape divine?
The rose? No rose unless it disentwine
From Venus' wreath the while she bends to kiss
Her deathly love?

VII.

Plain retrogression, this!
No, no: we poets go not back at all:
What you did we could do — from great to small
Sinking assuredly: if this world last
One moment longer when Man finds its Past
Exceed its Present — blame the Protoplast!
If we no longer see as you of old,
'T is we see deeper. Progress for the bold!
You saw the body, 't is the soul we see.
Try now! Bear witness while you walk with me.
I see as you: if we loose arms, stop pace,
'T is that you stand still, I conclude the race
Without your company. Come, walk once more
The "Walk": if I to-day as you of yore
See just like you the blind — then sight shall cry
— The whole long day quite gone through — victory!

VIII.

Thunders on thunders, doubling and redoubling
Doom o'er the mountain, while a sharp white fire
Now shone, now sheared its rusty herbage, troubling
Hardly the fir-boles, now discharged its ire
Full where some pine-tree's solitary spire
Crashed down, defiant to the last: till — lo,
The motive of the malice! — all aglow,
Circled with flame there yawned a sudden rift
I' the rock-face, and I saw a form erect
Front and defy the outrage, while — as checked,
Chidden, beside him dauntless in the drift —
Cowered a heaped creature, wing and wing outspread
In deprecation o'er the crouching head
Still hungry for the feast foregone awhile.
O thou, of scorn's unconquerable smile,
Was it when this — Jove's feathered fury — slipped
Gore-glutted from the heart's core whence he ripped —
This eagle-hound — neither reproach nor prayer —
Baffled, in one more fierce attempt to tear
Fate's secret from thy safeguard, — was it then
That all these thunders rent earth, ruined air

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To reach thee, pay thy patronage of men?
He thundered, — to withdraw, as beast to lair,
Before the triumph on thy pallid brow.
Gather the night again about thee now,
Hate on, love ever! Morn is breaking there —
The granite ridge pricks through the mist, turns gold
As wrong turns right. O laughters manifold
Of ocean's ripple at dull earth's despair!

IX.

But morning's laugh sets all the crags alight
Above the baffled tempest: tree and tree
Stir themselves from the stupor of the night,
And every strangled branch resumes its right
To breathe, shakes loose dark's clinging dregs, waves fre.
In dripping glory. Prone the runnels plunge,
While earth, distent with moisture like a sponge,
Smokes up, and leaves each plant its gem to see,
Each grass-blade's glory-glitter. Had I known
The torrent now turned river? — masterful
Making its rush o'er tumbled ravage — stone
And stub which barred the froths and foams: no bull
Ever broke bounds in formidable sport
More overwhelmingly, till lo, the spasm
Sets him to dare that last mad leap: report
Who may — his fortunes in the deathly chasm
That swallows him in silence! Rather turn
Whither, upon the upland, pedestalled
Into the broad day-splendor, whom discern
These eyes but thee, supreme one, rightly called
Moon-maid in heaven above and, here below,
Earth's huntress-queen? I note the garb succinct
Saving from smirch that purity of snow
From breast to knee — snow's self with just the tinct
Of the apple-blossom's heart-blush. Ah, the bow
Slack-strung her fingers grasp, where, ivory-linked
Horn curving blends with horn, a moonlike pair
Which mimic the brow's crescent sparkling so —
As if a star's live restless fragment winked
Proud yet repugnant, captive in such hair!
What hope along the hillside, what far bliss
Lets the crisp hair-plaits fall so low they kiss
Those lucid shoulders? Must a morn so blithe
Needs have its sorrow when the twang and hiss
Tell that from out thy sheaf one shaft makes writhe
Its victim, thou unerring Artemis?

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Why did the chamois stand so fair a mark
Arrested by the novel shape he dreamed
Was bred of liquid marble in the dark
Depths of the mountain's womb which ever teemed
With novel births of wonder? Not one spark
Of pity in that steel-gray glance which gleamed
At the poor hoof's protesting as it stamped
Idly the granite? Let me glide unseen
From thy proud presence: well mayst thou be queen
Of all those strange and sudden deaths which damped
So oft Love's torch and Hymen's taper lit
For happy marriage till the maidens paled
And perished on the temple-step, assailed
By — what except to envy must man's wit
Impute that sure implacable release
Of life from warmth and joy? But death means peace.

X.

Noon is the conqueror, — not a spray, nor leaf,
Nor herb, nor blossom but has rendered up
Its morning dew: the valley seemed one cup
Of cloud-smoke, but the vapor's reign was brief;
Sun-smitten, see, it hangs — the filmy haze —
Gray-garmenting the herbless mountain-side,
To soothe the day's sharp glare: while far and wide
Above unclouded burns the sky, one blaze
With fierce immitigable blue, no bird
Ventures to spot by passage. E'en of peaks
Which still presume there, plain each pale point speaks
In wan transparency of waste incurred
By over-daring: far from me be such!
Deep in the hollow, rather, where combine
Tree, shrub and brier to roof with shade and cool
The remnant of some lily-strangled pool,
Edged round with mossy fringing soft and fine.
Smooth lie the bottom slabs, and overhead
Watch elder, bramble, rose, and service-tree
And one beneficent rich barberry
Jewelled all over with fruit-pendants red.
What have I seen! O Satyr, well I know
How sad thy case, and what a world of woe
Was hid by the brown visage furry-framed
Only for mirth: who otherwise could think —
Marking thy mouth gape still on laughter's brink,
Thine eyes a-swim with merriment unnamed
But haply guessed at by their furtive wink?

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And all the while a heart was panting sick
Behind that shaggy bulwark of thy breast —
Passion it was that made those breath-bursts thick
I took for mirth subsiding into rest.
So, it was Lyda — she of all the train
Of forest-thridding nymphs, — 't was only she
Turned from thy rustic homage in disdain,
Saw but that poor uncouth outside of thee,
And, from her circling sisters, mocked a pain
Echo had pitied — whom Pan loved in vain —
For she was wishful to partake thy glee,
Mimic thy mirth — who loved her not again,
Savage for Lyda's sake. She crouches there —
Thy cruel beauty, slumberously laid
Supine on heaped-up beast-skins, unaware
Thy steps have traced her to the briery glade,
Thy greedy hands disclose the cradling lair,
Thy hot eyes reach and revel on the maid!

XI.

Now, what should this be for? The sun's decline
Seems as he lingered lest he lose some act
Dread and decisive, some prodigious fact
Like thunder from the safe sky's sapphirine
About to alter earth's conditions, packed
With fate for nature's self that waits, aware
What mischief unsuspected in the air
Menaces momently a cataract.
Therefore it is that yonder space extends
Untrenched upon by any vagrant tree,
Shrub, weed well-nigh; they keep their bounds, leave free
The platform for what actors? Foes or friends,
Here come they trooping silent: heaven suspends
Purpose the while they range themselves. I see!
Bent on a battle, two vast powers agree
This present and no after-contest ends
One or the other's grasp at rule in reach
Over the race of man — host fronting host,
As statue statue fronts — wrath-molten each,
Solidified by hate, — earth halved almost,
To close once more in chaos. Yet two shapes
Show prominent, each from the universe
Of minions round about him, that disperse
Like cloud-obstruction when a bolt escapes.
Who flames first? Macedonian is it thou?
Ay, and who fronts thee, King Darius, drapes
His form with purple, fillet-folds his brow.

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XII.

What, then the long day dies at last? Abrupt
The sun that seemed, in stooping, sure to melt
Our mountain-ridge, is mastered: black the belt
Of westward crags, his gold could not corrupt,
Barriers again the valley, lets the flow
Of lavish glory waste itself away
— Whither? For new climes, fresh eyes breaks the day!
Night was not to be baffled. If the glow
Were all that's gone from us! Did clouds, afloat
So filmily but now, discard no rose,
Sombre throughout the fleeciness that grows
A sullen uniformity. I note
Rather displeasure, — in the overspread
Change from the swim of gold to one pale lead
Oppressive to malevolence, — than late
Those amorous yearnings when the aggregate
Of cloudlets pressed that each and all might sate
Its passion and partake in relics red
Of day's bequeathment: now, a frown instead
Estranges, and affrights who needs must fare
On and on till his journey ends: but where?
Caucasus? Lost now in the night. Away
And far enough lies that Arcadia.
The human heroes tread the world's dark way
No longer. Yet I dimly see almost —
Yes, for my last adventure! 'T is a ghost.
So drops away the beauty! There he stands
Voiceless, scarce strives with deprecating hands. . . .

XIII.

Enough! Stop further fooling, De Lairesse!
My fault, not yours! Some fitter way express
Heart's satisfaction that the Past indeed
Is past, gives way before Life's best and last,
The all-including Future! What were life
Did soul stand still therein, forego her strife
Through the ambiguous Present to the goal
Of some all-reconciling Future? Soul,
Nothing has been which shall not bettered be
Hereafter, — leave the root, by law's decree
Whence springs the ultimate and perfect tree!
Busy thee with unearthing root? Nay, climb —
Quit trunk, branch, leaf and flower — reach, rest sublime
Where fruitage ripens in the blaze of day!

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O'erlook, despise, forget, throw flower away,
Intent on progress? No whit more than stop
Ascent therewith to dally, screen the top
Sufficiency of yield by interposed
Twistwork bold foot gets free from. Wherefore glozed
The poets — "Dream afresh old godlike shapes,
Recapture ancient fable that escapes,
Push back reality, repeople earth
With vanished falseness, recognize no worth
In fact new-born unless 't is rendered back
Pallid by fancy, as the western rack
Of fading cloud bequeaths the lake some gleam
Of its gone glory!"

XIV.

Let things be — not seem,
I counsel rather, — do, and nowise dream!
Earth's young significance is all to learn:
The dead Greek lore lies buried in the urn
Where who seeks fire finds ashes. Ghost, forsooth!
What was the best Greece babbled of as truth?
"A shade, a wretched nothing, — sad, thin, drear,
Cold, dark, it holds on to the lost loves here,
If hand have haply sprinkled o'er the dead
Three charitable dust-heaps, made mouth red
One moment by the sip of sacrifice:
Just so much comfort thaws the stubborn ice
Slow-thickening upward till it choke at length
The last faint flutter craving — not for strength,
Not beauty, not the riches and the rule
O'er men that made life life indeed." Sad school
Was Hades! Gladly, — might the dead but slink
To life back, — to the dregs once more would drink
Each interloper, drain the humblest cup
Fate mixes for humanity.

XV.

Cheer up, —
Be death with me, as with Achilles erst,
Of Man's calamities the last and worst:
Take it so! By proved potency that still
Makes perfect, be assured, come what come will,
What once lives never dies — what here attains
To a beginning, has no end, still gains
And never loses aught: when, where, and how —
Lies in Law's lap. What 's death then? Even now

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With so much knowledge is it hard to bear
Brief interposing ignorance? Is care
For a creation found at fault just there —
There where the heart breaks bond and outruns time,
To reach not follow what shall be?

XVI.

Here 's rhyme
Such as one makes now, — say, when Spring repeats
That miracle the Greek Bard sadly greets:
"Spring for the tree and herb — no Spring for us!"
Let Spring come: why, a man salutes her thus:

Dance, yellows and whites and reds, —
Lead your gay orgy, leaves, stalks, heads
Astir with the wind in the tulip-beds!

There 's sunshine; scarcely a wind at all
Disturbs starved grass and daisies small
On a certain mound by a churchyard wall.

Daisies and grass be my heart's bedfellows
On the mound wind spares and sunshine mellows:
Dance you, reds and whites and yellows!

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WITH CHARLES AVISON

I.

How strange! — but, first of all, the little fact
Which led my fancy forth. This bitter morn
Showed me no object in the stretch forlorn
Of garden-ground beneath my window, backed
By yon worn wall wherefrom the creeper, tacked
To clothe its brickwork, hangs now, rent and racked
By five months' cruel winter, — showed no torn
And tattered ravage worse for eyes to see
Than just one ugly space of clearance, left
Bare even of the bones which used to be
Warm wrappage, safe embracement: this one cleft —
— O what a life and beauty filled it up
Startlingly, when methought the rude clay cup
Ran over with poured bright wine! 'T was a bird
Breast-deep there, tugging at his prize, deterred
No whit by the fast-falling snow-flake: gain
Such prize my blackcap must by might and main —
The cloth-shred, still a-flutter from its nail
That fixed a spray once. Now, what told the tale
To thee, — no townsman but born orchard-thief, —
That here — surpassing moss-tuft, beard from sheaf
Of sun-scorched barley, horsehairs long and stout,
All proper country-pillage — here, no doubt,
Was just the scrap to steal should line thy nest
Superbly? Off he flew, his bill possessed
The booty sure to set his wife's each wing
Greenly a-quiver. How they climb and cling,
Hang parrot-wise to bough, these blackcaps! Strange
Seemed to a city-dweller that the finch
Should stray so far to forage: at a pinch,
Was not the fine wool's self within his range
— Filchings on every fence? But no: the need
Was of this rag of manufacture, spoiled
By art, and yet by nature near unsoiled,
New-suited to what scheming finch would breed
In comfort, this uncomfortable March.

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II.

Yet — by the first pink blossom on the larch! —
This was scarce stranger than that memory, —
In want of what should cheer the stay-at-home,
My soul, — must straight clap pinion, well-nigh roam
A century back, nor once close plume, descry
The appropriate rag to plunder, till she pounced —
Pray, on what relic of a brain long still?
What old-world work proved forage for the bill
Of memory the far-flyer? "March" announced,
I verily believe, the dead and gone
Name of a music-maker: one of such
In England as did little or did much,
But, doing, had their day once. Avison!
Singly and solely for an air of thine,
Bold-stepping "March," foot stept to ere my hand
Could stretch an octave, I o'erlooked the band
Of majesties familiar, to decline
On thee — not too conspicuous on the list
Of worthies who by help of pipe or wire
Expressed in sound rough rage or soft desire —
Thou, whileom of Newcastle organist!

III.

So much could one — well, thinnish air effect!
Am I ungrateful? for, your March, styled "Grand,"
Did veritably seem to grow, expand,
And greaten up to title as, unchecked,
Dream-marchers marched, kept marching, slow and sure,
In time, to tune, unchangeably the same,
From nowhere into nowhere, — out they came,
Onward they passed, and in they went. No lure
Of novel modulation pricked the flat
Forthright persisting melody, — no hint
That discord, sound asleep beneath the flint,
Struck — might spring spark-like, claim due tit-for-tat,
Quenched in a concord. No! Yet, such the might
Of quietude's immutability,
That somehow coldness gathered warmth, well-nigh
Quickened — which could not be! — grew burning-bright
With fife-shriek, cymbal-clash and trumpet-blare,
To drum-accentuation: pacing turned
Striding, and striding grew gigantic, spurned
At last the narrow space 'twixt earth and air,
So shook me back into my sober self.

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IV.

And where woke I? The March had set me down
There whence I plucked the measure, as his brown
Frayed flannel-bit my blackcap. Great John Relfe,
Master of mine, learned, redoubtable,
It little needed thy consummate skill
To fitly figure such a bass! The key
Was — should not memory play me false — well, C.
Ay, with the Greater Third, in Triple Time,
Three crotchets to a bar: no change, I grant,
Except from Tonic down to Dominant.
And yet — and yet — if I could put in rhyme
The manner of that marching! — which had stopped
— I wonder, where? — but that my weak self dropped
From out the ranks, to rub eyes disentranced,
And feel that, after all the way advanced,
Back must I foot it, I and my compeers,
Only to reach, across a hundred years,
The bandsman Avison whose little book
And large tune thus had led me the long way
(As late a rag my blackcap) from to-day
And to-day's music-manufacture, — Brahms,
Wagner, Dvorak, Liszt, — to where — trumpets, shawms,
Show yourselves joyful! — Handel reigns — supreme?
By no means! Buononcini's work is theme
For fit laudation of the impartial few:
(We stand in England, mind you!) Fashion too
Favors Geminiani — of those choice
Concertos: nor there wants a certain voice
Raised in thy favor likewise, famed Pepusch
Dear to our great-grandfathers! In a bush
Of Doctor's wig, they prized thee timing beats
While Greenway trilled "Alexis." Such were feats
Of music in thy day — dispute who list —
Avison, of Newcastle organist!

V.

And here 's your music all alive once more —
As once it was alive, at least: just so
The figured worthies of a waxwork-show
Attest — such people, years and years ago,
Looked thus when outside death had life below,
— Could say "We are now" not "We were of yore,"
— "Feel how our pulses leap!" and not "Explore —
Explain why quietude has settled o'er

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Surface once all-awork!" Ay, such a "Suite"
Roused heart to rapture, such a "Fugue" would catch
Soul heavenwards up, when time was: why attach
Blame to exhausted faultlessness, no match
For fresh achievement? Feat once — ever feat!
How can completion grow still more complete?
Hear Avison! He tenders evidence
That music in his day as much absorbed
Heart and soul then as Wagner's music now,
Perfect from centre to circumference —
Orbed to the full can be but fully orbed:
And yet — and yet — whence comes it that "O Thou"
Sighed by the soul at eve to Hesperus —
Will not again take wing and fly away
(Since fatal Wagner fixed it fast for us)
In some unmodulated minor? Nay,
Even by Handel's help!

VI.

I state it thus:
There is no truer truth obtainable
By Man than comes of music. "Soul" — (accept
A word which vaguely names what no adept
In word-use fits and fixes so that still
Thing shall not slip word's fetter and remain
Innominate as first, yet, free again,
Is no less recognized the absolute
Fact underlying that same other fact
Concerning which no cavil can dispute
Our nomenclature when we call it "Mind" —
Something not Matter) — "Soul," who seeks shall find
Distinct beneath that something. You exact
An illustrative image? This may suit.

VII.

We see a work: the worker works behind,
Invisible himself. Suppose his act
Be to o'erarch a gulf: he digs, transports,
Shapes and, through enginery — all sizes, sorts,
Lays stone by stone until a floor compact
Proves our bridged causeway. So works Mind — by stress
Of faculty, with loose facts, more or less,
Builds up our solid knowledge: all the same,
Underneath rolls what Mind may hide not tame,
An element which works beyond our guess,
Soul, the unsounded sea — whose lift of surge,

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Spite of all superstructure, lets emerge,
In flower and foam, Feeling from out the deeps
Mind arrogates no mastery upon —
Distinct indisputably. Has there gone
To dig up, drag forth, render smooth from rough
Mind's flooring, — operosity enough?
Still the successive labor of each inch,
Who lists may learn: from the last turn of winch
That let the polished slab-stone find its place,
To the first prod of pickaxe at the base
Of the unquarried mountain, — what was all
Mind's varied process except natural,
Nay, easy even, to descry, describe,
After our fashion? "So worked Mind: its tribe
Of senses ministrant above, below,
Far, near, or now or haply long ago
Brought to pass knowledge." But Soul's sea, — drawn whence,
Fed how, forced whither, — by what evidence
Of ebb and flow, that 's felt beneath the tread,
Soul has its course 'neath Mind's work overhead. —
Who tells of, tracks to source the founts of Soul?
Yet wherefore heaving sway and restless roll
This side and that, except to emulate
Stability above? To match and mate
Feeling with knowledge, — make as manifest
Soul's work as Mind's work, turbulence as rest,
Hates, loves, joys, woes, hopes, fears, that rise and sink
Ceaselessly, passion's transient flit and wink,
A ripple's tinting or a spume-sheet's spread
Whitening the wave, — to strike all this life dead,
Run mercury into a mould like lead,
And henceforth have the plain result to show —
How we Feel, hard and fast as what we Know —
This were the prize and is the puzzle! — which
Music essays to solve: and here 's the hitch
That balks her of full triumph else to boast.

VIII.

All Arts endeavor this, and she the most
Attains thereto, yet fails of touching: why?
Does Mind get Knowledge from Art's ministry?
What 's known once is known ever: Arts arrange,
Dissociate, re-distribute, interchange
Part with part, lengthen, broaden, high or deep
Construct their bravest, — still such pains produce
Change, not creation: simply what lay loose

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At first lies firmly after, what design
Was faintly traced in hesitating line
Once on a time, grows firmly resolute
Henceforth and evermore. Now, could we shoot
Liquidity into a mould, — some way
Arrest Soul's evanescent moods, and keep
Unalterably still the forms that leap
To life for once by help of Art! — which yearns
To save its capture: Poetry discerns,
Painting is 'ware of passion's rise and fall,
Bursting, subsidence, intermixture — all
A-seethe within the gulf. Each Art a-strain
Would stay the apparition, — nor in vain:
The Poet's word-mesh, Painter's sure and swift
Color-and-line-throw — proud the prize they lift!
Thus felt Man and thus looked Man, — passions caught
I' the midway swim of sea, — not much, if aught,
Of nether-brooding loves, hates, hopes and fears,
Enwombed past Art's disclosure. Fleet the years,
And still the Poet's page holds Helena
At gaze from topmost Troy — "But where are they,
My brothers, in the armament I name
Hero by hero? Can it be that shame
For their lost sister holds them from the war?"
— Knowing not they already slept afar
Each of them in his own dear native land.
Still on the Painter's fresco, from the hand
Of God takes Eve the life-spark whereunto
She trembles up from nothingness. Outdo
Both of them, Music! Dredging deeper yet,
Drag into day, — by sound, thy master-net, —
The abysmal bottom-growth, ambiguous thing
Unbroken of a branch, palpitating
With limbs' play and life's semblance! There it lies,
Marvel and mystery, of mysteries
And marvels, most to love and laud thee for!
Save it from chance and change we most abhor!
Give momentary feeling permanence,
So that thy capture hold, a century hence,
Truth's very heart of truth as, safe to-day,
The Painter's Eve the Poet's Helena
Still rapturously bend, afar still throw
The wistful gaze! Thanks, Homer, Angelo!
Could Music rescue thus from Soul's profound,
Give feeling immortality by sound,
Then, were she queenliest of Arts! Alas —

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As well expect the rainbow not to pass!
"Praise 'Radamisto'—love attains therein
To perfect utterance! Pity—what shall win
Thy secret like 'Rinaldo'?"—so men said:
Once all was perfume—now, the flower is dead—
They spied tints, sparks have left the spar! Love, hate,
Joy, fear, survive,—alike importunate
As ever to go walk the world again,
Nor ghost-like pant for outlet all in vain
Till Music loose them, fit each filmily
With form enough to know and name it by
For any recognizer sure of ken
And sharp of ear, no grosser denizen
Of earth than needs be. Nor to such appeal
Is Music long obdurate: off they steal—
How gently, dawn-doomed phantoms! back come they
Full-blooded with new crimson of broad day—
Passion made palpable once more. Ye look
Your last on Handel? Gaze your first on Gluck!
Why wistful search, O waning ones, the chart
Of stars for you while Haydn, while Mozart
Occupies heaven? These also, fanned to fire,
Flamboyant wholly,—so perfections tire,—
Whiten to wanness, till . . . let others note
The ever-new invasion!

IX.

I devote
Rather my modicum of parts to use
What power may yet avail to re-infuse
(In fancy, please you!) sleep that looks like death
With momentary liveliness, lend breath
To make the torpor half inhale. O Relfe,
An all-unworthy pupil, from the shelf
Of thy laboratory, dares unstop
Bottle, ope box, extract thence pinch and drop
Of dusts and dews a many thou didst shrine
Each in its right receptacle, assign
To each its proper office, letter large
Label and label, then with solemn charge,
Reviewing learnedly the list complete
Of chemical reactives, from thy feet
Push down the same to me, attent below,
Power in abundance: armed wherewith I go
To play the enlivener. Bring good antique stuff!
Was it alight once? Still lives spark enough

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For breath to quicken, run the smouldering ash
Red right-through. What, "stone-dead" were fools so rash
As style my Avison, because he lacked
Modern appliance, spread out phrase unracked
By modulations fit to make each hair
Stiffen upon his wig? See there — and there!
I sprinkle my reactives, pitch broadcast
Discords and resolutions, turn aghast
Melody's easy-going, jostle law
With license, modulate (no Bach in awe)
Change enharmonically (Hudl to thank)
And lo, upstart the flamelets, — what was blank
Turns scarlet, purple, crimson! Straightway scanned
By eyes that like new lustre — Love once more
Yearns through the Largo, Hatred as before
Rages in the Rubato: e'en thy March,
My Avison, which, sooth to say — (ne'er arch
Eyebrows in anger!) — timed, in Georgian years
The step precise of British Grenadiers
To such a nicety, — if score I crowd,
If rhythm I break, if beats I vary, — tap
At bar's off-starting turns true thunder-clap,
Ever the pace augmented till — what's here?
Titanic striding toward Olympus!

X.

Fear
No such irreverent innovation! Still
Glide on, go rolling, water-like, at will —
Nay, were thy melody in monotone,
The due three-parts dispensed with!

XI.

This alone
Comes of my tiresome talking: Music's throne
Seats somebody whom somebody unseats,
And whom in turn — by who knows what new feats
Of strength — shall somebody as sure push down,
Consign him dispossessed of sceptre, crown,
And orb imperial — whereto? Never dream
That what once lived shall ever die! They seem
Dead — do they? lapsed things lost in limbo? Bring
Our life to kindle theirs, and straight each king
Starts, you shall see, stands up, from head to foot
No inch that is not Purcell! Wherefore? (Suit
Measure to subject, first — no marching on

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Yet in thy bold C major, Avison,
As suited step a minute since: no: wait —
Into the minor key first modulate —
Gently with A, now — in the Lesser Third!)

XII.

Of all the lamentable debts incurred
By Man through buying knowledge, this were worst:
That he should find his last gain prove his first
Was futile — merely nescience absolute,
Not knowledge in the bud which holds a fruit
Haply undreamed of in the soul's Spring-tide,
Pursed in the petals Summer opens wide,
And Autumn, withering, rounds to perfect ripe, —
Not this, — but ignorance, a blur to wipe
From human records, late it graced so much.
"Truth — this attainment? Ah, but such and such
Beliefs of yore seemed inexpugnable
When we attained them! E'en as they, so will
This their successor have the due morn, noon,
Evening and night — just as an old-world tune
Wears out and drops away, until who hears
Smilingly questions — 'This it was brought tears
Once to all eyes, — this roused heart's rapture once?'
So will it be with truth that, for the nonce,
Styles itself truth perennial: 'ware its wile!
Knowledge turns nescience, — foremost on the file,
Simply proves first of our delusions."

XIII.

Now —
Blare it forth, bold C major! Lift thy brow,
Man, the immortal, that wast never fooled
With gifts no gifts at all, nor ridiculed —
Man knowing — he who nothing knew! As Hope,
Fear, Joy, and Grief, — though ampler stretch and scope
They seek and find in novel rhythm, fresh phrase, —
Were equally existent in far days
Of Music's dim beginning — even so,
Truth was at full within thee long ago,
Alive as now it takes what latest shape
May startle thee by strangeness. Truths escape
Time's insufficient garniture: they fade,
They fall — those sheathings now grown sere, whose aid
Was infinite to truth they wrapped, saved fine
And free through March frost: May dews crystalline

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Nourish truth merely, — does June boast the fruit
As — not new vesture merely but, to boot,
Novel creation? Soon shall fade and fall
Myth after myth — the husk-like lies I call
New truth's corolla-safeguard: Autumn comes,
So much the better!

XIV.

Therefore — bang the drums,
Blow the trumpets, Avison! March-motive? that's
Truth which endures resetting. Sharps and flats,
Lavish at need, shall dance athwart thy score
When ophicleide and bombardon's uproar
Mate the approaching trample, even now
Big in the distance — or my ears deceive —
Of federated England, fitly weave
March-music for the Future!

XV.

Or suppose
Back, and not forward, transformation goes?
Once more some sable-stoled procession — say,
From Little-ease to Tyburn wends its way,
Out of the dungeon to the gallows-tree
Where heading, hacking, hanging is to be
Of half-a-dozen recusants — this day
Three hundred years ago! How duly drones
Elizabethan plain-song — dim antique
Grown clarion-clear the while I humbly wreak
A classic vengeance on thy March! It moans —
Larges and Longs and Breves displacing quite
Crotchet-and-quaver pertness — brushing bars
Aside and filling vacant sky with stars
Hidden till now that day returns to night.

XVI.

Nor night nor day: one purpose move us both,
Be thy mood mine! As thou wast minded, Man's
The cause our music champions: I were loth
To think we cheered our troop to Preston Pans
Ignobly: back to times of England's best!
Parliament stands for privilege — life and limb
Guards Hollis, Haselrig, Strode, Hampden, Pym,
The famous Five. There 's rumor of arrest.
Bring up the Train Bands, Southwark! They protest:
Shall we not all join chorus? Hark the hymn,

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— Rough, rude, robustious — homely heart a-throb,
Harsh voice a-hallo, as beseems the mob!
How good is noise! what 's silence but despair
Of making sound match gladness never there?
Give me some great glad "subject," glorious Bach,
Where cannon-roar not organ-peal we lack!
Join in, give voice robustious rude and rough, —
Avison helps — so heart lend noise enough!

Fife, trump, drum, sound! and singers then
Marching say "Pym, the man of men!"
Up, heads, your proudest — out, throats, your loudest —
"Somerset's Pym!"

Strafford from the block, Eliot from the den,
Foes, friends, shout "Pym, our citizen!"
Wail, the foes he quelled, — hail, the friends he held,
"Tavistock's Pym!"

Hearts prompt heads, hands that ply the pen
Teach babes unborn the where and when.
— Tyrants, he braved them, — patriots, he saved them —
"Westminster's Pym!"

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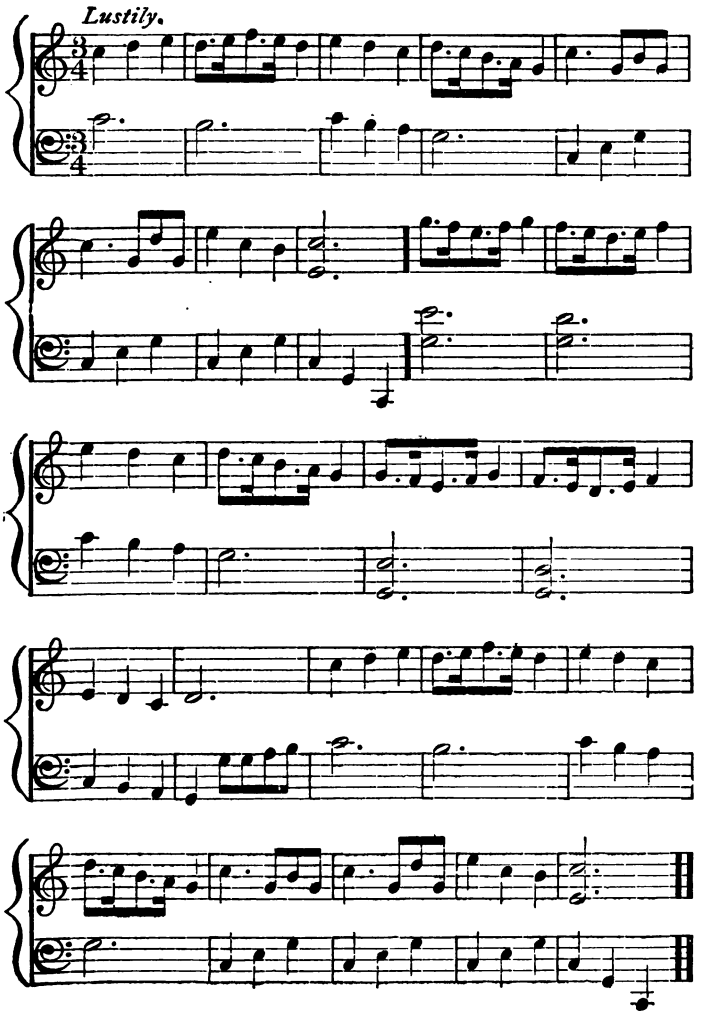

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FUST AND HIS FRIENDS

AN EPILOGUE.

(Inside the House of Fust, Mayence, 1457.)

FIRST FRIEND.

Up, up, up — next step of the staircase
Lands us, lo, at the chamber of dread!

SECOND FRIEND.

Locked and barred?

THIRD FRIEND.

Door open — the rare case!

FOURTH FRIEND.

Ay, there he leans — lost wretch!

FIFTH FRIEND.

His head
Sunk on his desk 'twixt his arms outspread!

SIXTH FRIEND.

Hallo, — wake, man, ere God thunderstrike Mayence
— Mulct for thy sake who art Satan's, John Fust!
Satan installed here, God's rule in abeyance,
Mayence some morning may crumble to dust.
Answer our questions thou shalt and thou must!

SEVENTH FRIEND.

Softly and fairly! Wherefore a-gloom?
Greet us, thy gossipry, cousin and sib!
Raise the forlorn brow, Fust! Make room —
Let daylight through arms which, enfolding thee, crib
From those clenched lids the comfort of sunshine!

FIRST FRIEND.

So glib
Thy tongue slides to "comfort" already? Not mine!
Behoves us deal roundly: the wretch is distraught

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— Too well I guess wherefore! Behoves a Divine
— Such as I, by grace, boast me — to threaten one caught
In the enemy's toils, — setting "comfort" at nought.

SECOND FRIEND.

Nay, Brother, so hasty? I heard — nor long since —
Of a certain Black Art'sman who, — helplessly bound
By rash pact with Satan, — through paying — why mince
The matter? — fit price to the Church, — safe and sound
Full a year after death in his grave-clothes was found.

Whereas 't is notorious the Fiend claims his due
During lifetime, — comes clawing, with talons aflame,
The soul from the flesh-rags left smoking and blue:
So it happed with John Faust; lest John Fust fare the same, —
Look up, I adjure thee by God's holy name!

For neighbors and friends — no foul hell-brood flock we!
Saith Solomon "Words of the wise are as goads:"
Ours prick but to startle from torpor, set free
Soul and sense from death's drowse!

FIRST FRIEND.

And soul, wakened, unloads
Much sin by confession: no mere palinodes!

— "I was youthful and wanton, am old yet no sage:
When angry I cursed, struck and slew: did I want?
Right and left did I rob: though no war I dared wage
With the Church (God forbid!) — harm her least minis-trant —
Still I outraged all else. Now that strength is grown scant,

I am probity's self" — no such bleatings as these!
But avowal of guilt so enormous, it balks
Tongue's telling. Yet penitence prompt may appease
God's wrath at thy bond with the Devil who stalks
— Strides hither to strangle thee!

FUST.

Childhood so talks. —

Not rare wit nor ripe age — ye boast them, my neighbors! —
Should lay such a charge on your townsman, this Fust
Who, known for a life spent in pleasures and labors

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If freakish yet venial, could scarce be induced
To traffic with fiends.

FIRST FRIEND.

So, my words have unloosed

A plie from those pale lips corrugate but now?

FUST.

Lost count me, yet not as ye lean to surmise.

FIRST FRIEND.

To surmise? to establish! Unbury that brow!
Look up, that thy judge may read clear in thine eyes!

SECOND FRIEND.

By your leave, Brother Barnabite! Mine to advise!

— Who arraign thee, John Fust! What was bruited erewhile
Now bellows through Mayence. All cry — thou hast trucked
Salvation away for lust's solace! Thy smile
Takes its hue from hell's smoulder!

FUST.

Too certain! I sucked

— Got drunk at the nipple of sense.

SECOND FRIEND.

Thou hast ducked —

Art drowned there, say rather! Faugh — fleshly disport!
How else but by help of Sir Belial didst win
That Venus-like lady, no drudge of thy sort
Could lure to become his accomplice in sin?
Folk nicknamed her Helen of Troy!

FIRST FRIEND.

Best begin

At the very beginning. Thy father, — all knew,
A mere goldsmith . . .

FUST.

Who knew him, perchance may know this —
He dying left much gold and jewels no few:
Whom these help to court with, but seldom shall miss
The love of a leman: true witchcraft, I wis!

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FIRST FRIEND.

Dost flout me? 'T is said, in debauchery's guild
Admitted prime guttler and guzzler — O swine! —
To honor thy headship, those tosspots so swilled
That out of their table there sprouted a vine
Whence each claimed a cluster, awaiting thy sign

To out knife, off mouthful: when — who could suppose
Such malice in magic? — each sot woke and found
Cold steel but an inch from the neighbor's red nose
He took for a grape-bunch!

FUST.

Does that so astound
Sagacity such as ye boast, — who surround

Your mate with eyes staring, hairs standing erect
At his magical feats? Are good burghers unversed
In the humors of toping? Full oft, I suspect,
Ye, counting your fingers, call thumbkin their first,
And reckon a groat every guilder disbursed.

What marvel if wags, while the skinker fast brimmed
Their glass with rare tipple's enticement, should gloat
— Befooled and beflustered — through optics drink-dimmed —
On this draught and that, till each found in his throat
Our Rhenish smack rightly as Raphal? For, note —

They fancied — their fuddling deceived them so grossly —
That liquor sprang out of the table itself
Through gimlet-holes drilled there, — nor noticed how closely
The skinker kept plying my guests, from the shelf
O'er their heads, with the potable madness. No elf

Had need to persuade them a vine rose umbrageous,
Fruit-bearing, thirst-quenching! Enough! I confess
To many such fool-pranks, but none so outrageous
That Satan was called in to help me: excess
I own to, I grieve at — no more and no less.

SECOND FRIEND.

Strange honors were heaped on thee — medal for breast,
Chain for neck, sword for thigh: not a lord of the land
But acknowledged thee peer! What ambition possessed
A goldsmith by trade, with craft's grime on his hand,
To seek such associates?

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FUST.

Spare taunts! Understand—

I submit me! Of vanities under the sun,
Pride seized me at last as concupiscence first,
Crapulosity ever: true Fiends, everyone,
Haled this way and that my poor soul: thus amerced —
Forgive and forget me!

FIRST FRIEND.

Had flesh sinned the worst,

Yet help were in counsel: the Church could absolve:
But say not men truly thou barredst escape
By signing and sealing . . .

SECOND FRIEND.

On me must devolve
The task of extracting . . .

FIRST FRIEND.

Shall Barnabites ape
Us Dominican experts?

SEVENTH FRIEND.

Nay, Masters, — agape

When Hell yawns for a soul, 't is myself claim the task
Of extracting, by just one plain question, God's truth!
Where 's Peter Genesheim thy partner? I ask
Why, cloistered up still in thy room, the pale youth
Slaves tongue-tied — thy trade brooks no tattling forsooth!

No less he, thy *famulus*, suffers entrapping,
Succumbs to good fellowship: barrel a-broach
Runs freely nor needs any subsequent tapping:
Quoth Peter "That room, none but I dare approach,
Holds secrets will help me to ride in my coach."

He prattles, we profit: in brief, he assures
Thou hast taught him to speak so that all men may hear
— Each alike, wide world over, Jews, Pagans, Turks, Moors,
The same as we Christians — speech heard far and near
At one and the same magic moment!

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FUST.

That 's clear!

Said he — how?

SEVENTH FRIEND.

Is it like he was licensed to learn?
Who doubts but thou dost this by aid of the Fiend?
Is it so? So it is, for thou smilest! Go, burn
To ashes, since such proves thy portion, unscreened
By bell, book and candle! Yet lately I weened

Balm yet was in Gilead, — some healing in store
For the friend of my bosom. Men said thou wast sunk
In a sudden despondency: not, as before,
Fust gallant and gay with his pottle and punk,
But sober, sad, sick as one yesterday drunk!

FUST.

Spare Fust, then, thus contrite! — who, youthful and healthy,
Equipped for life's struggle with culture of mind,
Sound flesh and sane soul in coherence, born wealthy,
Nay, wise — how he wasted endowment designed
For the glory of God and the good of mankind!

That much were misused such occasions of grace
Ye well may upbraid him, who bows to the rod.
But this should bid anger to pity give place —
He has turned from the wrong, in the right path to plod,
Makes amends to mankind and craves pardon of God.

Yea, friends, even now from my lips the "*Heureka* —
Soul saved!" was nigh bursting — unduly elate!
Have I brought Man advantage, or hatched — so to speak — a
Strange serpent, no cygnet? 'T is this I debate
Within me. Forbear, and leave Fust to his fate!

FIRST FRIEND.

So abject, late lofty? Methinks I spy respite.
Make clean breast, discover what mysteries hide
In thy room there!

SECOND FRIEND.

Ay, out with them! Do Satan despite!
Remember what caused his undoing was pride!

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FIRST FRIEND.

Dumb devil! Remains one resource to be tried!

SECOND FRIEND.

Exorcise!

SEVENTH FRIEND.

Nay, first — is there any remembers
In substance that potent "*Ne pulvis*" — a psalm
Whereof some live spark haply lurks 'mid the embers
Which choke in my brain. Talk of "Gilead and balm"?
I mind me, sung half through, this gave such a qualm

To Asmodeus inside of a Hussite, that, queasy,
He broke forth in brimstone with curses. I 'm strong
In — at least the commencement: the rest should go easy,
Friends helping. "*Ne pulvis et ignis*" . . .

SIXTH FRIEND.

All wrong!

FIFTH FRIEND.

I 've conned till I captured the whole.

SEVENTH FRIEND.

Get along!

"*Ne pulvis et cinis superbe te geras,*
Nam fulmina" . . .

SIXTH FRIEND.

Fiddlestick! Peace, dolts and dorrs!
Thus runs it "*Ne Numinis fulmina feras*" —
Then "*Hominis perfidi justa sunt sors*
Fulmen et grando et horrida mors."

SEVENTH FRIEND.

You blunder. "*Irati ne.*" . . .

SIXTH FRIEND.

Mind your own business!

FIFTH FRIEND.

I do not so badly, who gained the monk's leave
To study an hour his choice parchment. A dizziness
May well have surprised me. No Christian dares thieve,
Or I scarce had returned him his treasure. These cleave:

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"*Nos pulvis et cinis, trementes, gementes,*
Venimus" — some such word — "*ad te, Domine!*
Da lumen, juvamen, ut sancta sequentes
Cor . . . corda" . . . Plague take it!

SEVENTH FRIEND.

— "*erecta sint spe:*"
Right text, ringing rhyme, and ripe Latin for me!

SIXTH FRIEND.

A Canon's self wrote it me fair: I was tempted
To part with the sheepskin.

SEVENTH FRIEND.

Didst grasp and let go
Such a godsend, thou Judas? My purse had been emptied
Ere part with the prize!

FUST.

Do I dream? Say ye so?
Clouds break, then! Move, world! I have gained my "*Pou sto*"!

I am saved: Archimedes, salute me!

OMNES.

Assistance!
Help, Angels! He summons . . . Aroint thee! — by name,
His familiar!

FUST.

Approach!

OMNES.

Devil, keep thy due distance!

FUST.

Be tranquillized, townsmen! The knowledge ye claim
Behold, I prepare to impart. Praise or blame, —

Your blessing or banning, whatever betide me,
At last I accept. The slow travail of years,
The long-teeming brain's birth — applaud me, deride me, —
At last claims revealment. Wait!

SEVENTH FRIEND.

Wait till appears
Uncaged Archimedes cooped-up there?

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SECOND FRIEND.

Who fears?

Here 's have at thee!

SEVENTH FRIEND.

Correctly now! "*Pulvis et cinis*" . . .

FUST.

The verse ye so value, it happens I hold
In my memory safe from *initium* to *finis*.
Word for word, I produce you the whole, plain enrolled,
Black letters, white paper — no scribe's red and gold!

OMNES.

Aroint thee!

FUST.

I go and return. (*He enters the inner room.*)

FIRST FRIEND.

Ay, 't is "*ibis*"
No doubt: but as boldly "*redibis*" — who 'll say?
I rather conjecture "*in Orco peribis!*"

SEVENTH FRIEND.

Come, neighbors!

SIXTH FRIEND.

I 'm with you! Show courage and stay
Hell's outbreak? Sirs, cowardice here wins the day!

FIFTH FRIEND.

What luck had that student of Bamberg who ventured
To peep in the cell where a wizard of note
Was busy in getting some black deed debentured
By Satan? In dog's guise there sprang at his throat
A flame-breathing fury. Fust favors, I note,

An ugly huge lurcher!

SEVENTH FRIEND.

If I placed reliance
As thou, on the beads thou art telling so fast,
I 'd risk just a peep through the keyhole.

SIXTH FRIEND.

Appliance
Of ear might be safer. Five minutes are past.

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OMNES.

Saints, save us! The door is thrown open at last!

FUST (*re-enters, the door closing behind him*).

As I promised, behold I perform! Apprehend you
The object I offer is poison or pest?
Receive without harm from the hand I extend you
A gift that shall set every scruple at rest!
Shrink back from mere paper-strips? Try them and test!

Still hesitate? Myk, was it thou who lamentedst
Thy five wits clean failed thee to render aright
A poem read once and no more? — who repentedst
Vile pelf had induced thee to banish from sight
The characters none but our clerics indite?

Take and keep!

FIRST FRIEND.

Blessed Mary and all Saints about her!

SECOND FRIEND.

What imps deal so deftly, — five minutes suffice
To play thus the penman?

THIRD FRIEND.

By Thomas the Doubter,
Five minutes, no more!

FOURTH FRIEND.

Out on arts that entice
Such scribes to do homage!

FIFTH FRIEND.

Stay! Once — and now twice —

Yea, a third time, my sharp eye completes the inspection
Of line after line, the whole series, and finds
Each letter join each — not a fault for detection!
Such upstrokes, such downstrokes, such strokes of all kinds
In the criss-cross, all perfect!

SIXTH FRIEND.

There 's nobody minds

His quill-craft with more of a conscience, o'erscratches
A sheepskin more nimbly and surely with ink,

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Than Paul the Sub-Prior: here 's paper that matches
His parchment with letter on letter, no link
Overleapt — underlost!

SEVENTH FRIEND.

No erasure, I think —

No blot, I am certain!

FUST.

Accept the new treasure!

SIXTH FRIEND.

I remembered full half!

SEVENTH FRIEND.

But who other than I
(Bear witness, bystanders!) when he broke the measure
Repaired fault with "*fulmen*"?

FUST.

Put bickerings by!
Here 's for thee — thee — and thee, too: at need a supply

(*distributing Proofs*)

For Mayence, though seventy times seven should muster!
How now? All so feeble of faith that no face
Which fronts me but whitens — or yellows, were juster?
Speak out lest I summon my Spirits!

OMNES.

Grace — grace!
Call none of thy — helpmates! We 'll answer apace!

My paper — and mine — and mine also — they vary
In nowise — agree in each tittle and jot!
Fust, how — why was this?

FUST.

Shall such "*Cur*" miss a "*quare*"!
Within, there! Throw doors wide! Behold who complot
To abolish the scribe's work — blur, blunder and blot!

(*The doors open, and the Press is discovered in operation.*)

Brave full-bodied birth of this brain that conceived thee
In splendor and music, — sustained the slow drag

Of the days stretched to years dim with doubt, — yet believed thee,
Had faith in thy first leap of life! Pulse might flag —
— Mine fluttered how faintly! — Arch-moment might lag

Its longest — I bided, made light of endurance,
Held hard by the hope of an advent which — dreamed,
Is done now: night yields to the dawn's reassurance:
I have thee — I hold thee — my fancy that seemed,
My fact that proves palpable! Ay, Sirs, I schemed

Completion that 's fact: see this Engine — be witness
Yourselves of its working! Nay, handle my Types!
Each block bears a Letter: in order and fitness
I range them. Turn, Peter, the winch! See, it gripes
What 's under! Let loose — draw! In regular stripes

Lies plain, at one pressure, your poem — touched, tinted,
Turned out to perfection! The sheet, late a blank,
Filled — ready for reading, — not written but PRINTED!
Omniscient omnipotent God, Thee I thank,
Thee ever, Thee only! — Thy creature that shrank

From no task Thou, Creator, imposedst! Creation
Revealed me no object, from insect to Man,
But bore Thy hand's impress: earth glowed with salvation:
"Hast sinned? Be thou saved, Fust! Continue my plan,
Who spake and earth was: with my word things began.

"As sound so went forth, to the sight be extended
Word's mission henceforward! The task I assign,
Embrace — thy allegiance to evil is ended!
Have cheer, soul impregnate with purpose! Combine
Soul and body, give birth to my concept — called thine!

"Far and wide, North and South, East and West, have dominion
O'er thought, winged wonder, O Word! Traverse world
In sun-flash and sphere-song! Each beat of thy pinion
Bursts night, beckons day: once Truth's banner unfurled,
Where 's Falsehood? Sun-smitten, to nothingness hurled!"

More humbly — so, friends, did my fault find redemption.
I sinned, soul-entoiled by the tether of sense:
My captor reigned master: I plead no exemption
From Satan's award to his servant: defence
From the fiery and final assault would be — whence?

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By making — as man might — to truth restitution!
Truth is God: trample lies and lies' father, God's foe!
Fix fact fast: truths change by an hour's revolution:
What deed's very doer, unaided, can show
How 't was done a year — month — week — day — minute ago?

At best, he relates it — another reports it —
A third — nay, a thousandth records it: and still
Narration, tradition, no step but distorts it,
As down from truth's height it goes sliding until
At the low level lie-mark it stops — whence no skill

Of the scribe, intervening too tardily, rescues
— Once fallen — lost fact from lie's fate there. What scribe
— Eyes horny with poring, hands crippled with desk-use,
Brains fretted by fancies — the volatile tribe
That tease weary watchers — can boast that no bribe

Shuts eye and frees hand and remits brain from toiling?
Truth gained — can we stay, at whatever the stage,
Truth a-slide, — save her snow from its ultimate soiling
In mire, — by some process, stamp promptly on page
Fact spoiled by pen's plodding, make truth heritage

Not merely of clerics but poured out, full measure,
On clowns — every mortal endowed with a mind?
Read, gentle and simple! Let labor win leisure
At last to bid truth do all duty assigned,
Not pause at the noble but pass to the hind!

How bring to effect such swift sure simultaneous
Unlimited multiplication? How spread
By an arm-sweep a hand-throw — no helping extraneous —
Truth broadcast o'er Europe? "The goldsmith" I said
"Graves limning on gold: why not letters on lead?"

So, Tuscan artificer, grudge not thy pardon
To me who played false, made a furtive descent,
Found the sly secret work-shop, — thy genius kept guard on
Too slackly for once, — and surprised thee low-bent
O'er thy labor — some chalice thy tool would indent

With a certain free scroll-work framed round by a border
Of foliage and fruitage: no scratching so fine,
No shading so shy but, in ordered disorder,
Each flourish came clear, — unbewildered by shine,
On the gold, irretrievably right, lay each line.

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How judge if thy hand worked thy will? By reviewing,
Revising again and again, piece by piece,
Tool's performance, — this way, as I watched. 'T was through glueing
A paper-like film-stuff — thin, smooth, void of crease,
On each cut of the graver: press hard! at release,

No mark on the plate but the paper showed double:
His work might proceed: as he judged — space or speck
Up he filled, forth he flung — was relieved thus from trouble
Lest wrong — once — were right never more: what could check
Advancement, completion? Thus lay at my beck —

At my call — triumph likewise! "For" cried I "what hinders
That graving turns Printing? Stamp one word — not one
But fifty such, phœnix-like, spring from death's cinders, —
Since death is word's doom, clerics hide from the sun
As some churl closets up this rare chalice." Go, run

Thy race now, Fust's child! High, O Printing, and holy
Thy mission! These types, see, I chop and I change
Till the words, every letter, a pageful, not slowly
Yet surely lies fixed: last of all, I arrange
A paper beneath, stamp it, loosen it!

FIRST FRIEND.

Strange!

SECOND FRIEND.

How simple exceedingly!

FUST.

Bustle, my Schœfer!
Set type,— quick, Genesheim! Turn screw now!

THIRD FRIEND.

Just that!

FOURTH FRIEND.

And no such vast miracle!

FUST.

"Plough with my heifer,
Ye find out my riddle," quoth Samson, and pat
He speaks to the purpose. Grapes squeezed in the vat

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Yield to sight and to taste what is simple — a liquid
Mere urchins may sip: but give time, let ferment —
You 've wine, manhood's master! Well, "*rectius si quid*
Novistis im-per-ti-te!" Wait the event,
Then weigh the result! But, whate'er Thy intent,

O Thou, the one force in the whole variation
Of visible nature, — at work — do I doubt? —
From Thy first to our last, in perpetual creation —
A film hides us from Thee — 'twixt inside and out,
A film, on this earth where Thou bringest about

New marvels, new forms of the glorious, the gracious,
We bow to, we bless for: no star bursts heaven's dome
But Thy finger impels it, no weed peeps audacious
Earth's clay-floor from out, but Thy finger makes room
For one world's-want the more in Thy Cosmos: presume

Shall Man, Microcosmos, to claim the conception
Of grandeur, of beauty, in thought, word or deed?
I toiled, but Thy light on my dubiousest step shone:
If I reach the glad goal, is it I who succeed
Who stumbled at starting tripped up by a reed,

Or Thou? Knowledge only and absolute, glory
As utter be Thine who concedest a spark
Of Thy spheric perfection to earth's transitory
Existences! Nothing that lives, but Thy mark
Gives law to — life's light: what is doomed to the dark?

Where 's ignorance? Answer, creation! What height,
What depth has escaped Thy commandment — to Know?
What birth in the ore-bed but answers aright
Thy sting at its heart which impels — bids "E'en so,
Not otherwise move or be motionless, — grow,

"Decline, disappear!" Is the plant in default
How to bud, when to branch forth? The bird and the beast
— Do they doubt if their safety be found in assault
Or escape? Worm or fly, of what atoms the least
But follows light's guidance, — will famish, not feast?

In such various degree, fly and worm, ore and plant,
All know, none is witless: around each, a wall
Encloses the portion, or ample or scant,
Of Knowledge: beyond which one hair's breadth, for all
Lies blank — not so much as a blackness — a pall

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Some sense unimagined must penetrate: plain
Is only old license to stand, walk or sit,
Move so far and so wide in the narrow domain
Allotted each nature for life's use: past it
How immensity spreads does he guess? Not a whit.

Does he care? Just as little. Without? No, within
Concerns him? he Knows. Man Ignores — thanks to Thee
Who madest him know, but — in knowing — begin
To know still new vastness of knowledge must be
Outside him — to enter, to traverse, in fee

Have and hold! "Oh, Man's ignorance!" hear the fool whine!
How were it, for better or worse, didst thou grunt
Contented with sapience — the lot of the swine
Who knows he was born for just truffles to hunt? —
Monks' Paradise — "*Semper sint res uti sunt!*"

No, Man 's the prerogative — knowledge once gained —
To ignore, — find new knowledge to press for, to swerve
In pursuit of, no, not for a moment: attained —
Why, onward through ignorance! Dare and deserve!
As still to its asymptote speedeth the curve,

So approximates Man — Thee, who, reachable not,
Hast formed him to yearningly follow Thy whole
Sole and single omniscience!
Such, friends, is my lot:
I am back with the world: one more step to the goal
Thanks for reaching I render — Fust's help to Man's soul!

Mere mechanical help? So the hand gives a toss
To the falcon, — aloft once, spread pinions and fly,
Beat air far and wide, up and down and across!
My Press strains a-tremble: whose masterful eye
Will be first, in new regions, new truth to descry?

Give chase, soul! Be sure each new capture consigned
To my Types will go forth to the world, like God's bread
— Miraculous food not for body but mind,
Truth's manna! How say you? Put case that, instead
Of old leasing and lies, we superiorly fed

These Heretics, Hussites . . .

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FIRST FRIEND.

First answer my query! If saved, art thou happy?

FUST.

I was and I am.

FIRST FRIEND.

Thy visage confirms it: how comes, then, that — weary
And woe-begone late — was it show, was it sham? —
We found thee sunk thiswise?

SECOND FRIEND.

— In need of the dram
From the flask which a provident neighbor might carry!

FUST.

Ah, friends, the fresh triumph soon flickers, fast fades!
I hailed Word's dispersion: could heartleaps but tarry!
Through me does Print furnish Truth wings? The same aids
Cause Falsehood to range just as widely. What raids

On a region undreamed of does Printing enable
Truth's foe to effect! Printed leasing and lies
May speed to the world's farthest corner — gross fable
No less than pure fact — to impede, neutralize,
Abolish God's gift and Man's gain!

FIRST FRIEND.

Dost surmise
What struck me at first blush? Our Beghards, Waldenses,
Jeronimites, Hussites — does one show his head,
Spout heresy now? Not a priest in his senses
Deigns answer mere speech, but piles fagots instead,
Refines as by fire, and, him silenced, all 's said.

Whereas if in future I pen an opuscule
Defying retort, as of old when rash tongues
Were easy to tame, — straight some knave of the Huss-School
Prints answer forsooth! Stop invisible lungs?
The barrel of blasphemy broached once, who bungs?

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SECOND FRIEND.

Does my sermon, next Easter, meet fitting acceptance?
Each captious disputative boy has his quirk
"*An cuique credendum sit?*" Well, the Church kept "*ans*"
In order till Fust set his engine at work!
What trash will come flying from Jew, Moor, and Turk

When, goosequill, thy reign o'er the world is abolished!
Goose — ominous name! With a goose woe began:
Quoth Huss — which means "goose" in his idiom unpolished —
"Ye burn now a Goose: there succeeds me a Swan
Ye shall find quench your fire!"

FUST.

I foresee such a man.

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ASOLANDO

TO MRS. ARTHUR BRONSON.

To whom but you, dear Friend, should I dedicate verses — some few written, all of them supervised, in the comfort of your presence, and with yet another experience of the gracious hospitality now bestowed on me since so many a year, — adding a charm even to my residences at Venice, and leaving me little regret for the surprise and delight at my visits to Asolo in bygone days?

I unite, you will see, the disconnected poems by a title-name popularly ascribed to the inventiveness of the ancient secretary of Queen Cornaro whose palace-tower still overlooks us: *Asolare* — "to disport in the open air, amuse one's self at random." The objection that such a word nowhere occurs in the works of the Cardinal is hardly important — Bembo was too thorough a purist to conserve in print a term which in talk he might possibly toy with: but the word is more likely derived from a Spanish source. I use it for love of the place, and in requital of your pleasant assurance that an early poem of mine first attracted you thither — where and elsewhere, at La Mura as Cà Alvisi, may all happiness attend you!

Gratefully and affectionately yours,

R. B.

Asolo: *October* 15, 1889.

PROLOGUE.

"The Poet's age is sad: for why?
In youth, the natural world could show
No common object but his eye
At once involved with alien glow —
His own soul's iris-bow.

"And now a flower is just a flower:
Man, bird, beast are but beast, bird, man —
Simply themselves, uncinct by dower
Of dyes which, when life's day began,
Round each in glory ran."

Friend, did you need an optic glass,
Which were your choice? A lens to drape
In ruby, emerald, chrysopras,
Each object — or reveal its shape
Clear outlined, past escape,

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The naked very thing? — so clear
That, when you had the chance to gaze,
You found its inmost self appear
Through outer seeming — truth ablaze,
Not falsehood's fancy-haze?

How many a year, my Asolo,
Since — one step just from sea to land —
I found you, loved yet feared you so —
For natural objects seemed to stand
Palpably fire-clothed! No —

No mastery of mine o'er these!
Terror with beauty, like the Bush
Burning but unconsumed. Bend knees,
Drop eyes to earthward! Language? Tush!
Silence 't is awe decrees.

And now? The lambent flame is — where?
Lost from the naked world: earth, sky,
Hill, vale, tree, flower, — Italia's rare
O'er-running beauty crowds the eye —
But flame? The Bush is bare.

Hill, vale, tree, flower — they stand distinct,
Nature to know and name. What then?
A Voice spoke thence which straight unlinked
Fancy from fact: see, all 's in ken:
Has once my eyelid winked?

No, for the purged ear apprehends
Earth's import, not the eye late dazed:
The Voice said, "Call my works thy friends!
At Nature dost thou shrink amazed?
God is it who transcends."

Asolo: *September* 6, 1889.

ROSNY.

Woe, he went galloping into the war,
Clara, Clara!
Let us two dream: shall he 'scape with a scar?
Scarcely disfigurement, rather a grace
Making for manhood which nowise we mar:
See, while I kiss it, the flush on his face —
Rosny, Rosny!

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Light does he laugh: "With your love in my soul" —
(Clara, Clara!)
"How could I other than — sound, safe, and whole —
Cleave who opposed me asunder, yet stand
Scatheless beside you, as, touching love's goal,
Who won the race kneels, craves reward at your hand —
Rosny, Rosny?"

Ay, but if certain who envied should see!
Clara, Clara,
Certain who simper: "The hero for me
Hardly of life were so chary as miss
Death — death and fame — that 's love's guerdon when She
Boasts, proud bereaved one, her choice fell on this
Rosny, Rosny!"

So, — go on dreaming, — he lies mid a heap
(Clara, Clara,)
Of the slain by his hand: what is death but a sleep?
Dead, with my portrait displayed on his breast:
Love wrought his undoing: "No prudence could keep
The love-maddened wretch from his fate." That is best,
Rosny, Rosny!

DUBIETY.

I WILL be happy if but for once:
Only help me, Autumn weather,
Me and my cares to screen, ensconce
In luxury's sofa-lap of leather!

Sleep? Nay, comfort — with just a cloud
Suffusing day too clear and bright:
Eve's essence, the single drop allowed
To sully, like milk, Noon's water-white.

Let gauziness shade, not shroud, — adjust,
Dim and not deaden, — somehow sheathe
Aught sharp in the rough world's busy thrust,
If it reach me through dreaming's vapor-wreath.

Be life so, all things ever the same!
For, what has disarmed the world? Outside
Quiet and peace: inside, nor blame
Nor want, nor wish whate'er betide.

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What is it like that has happened before?
A dream? No dream, more real by much.
A vision? But fanciful days of yore
Brought many: mere musing seems not such.

Perhaps but a memory, after all!
— Of what came once when a woman leant
To feel for my brow where her kiss might fall.
Truth ever, truth only the excellent!

NOW.

Out of your whole life give but a moment!
All of your life that has gone before,
All to come after it, — so you ignore,
So you make perfect the present, — condense,
In a rapture of rage, for perfection's endowment,
Thought and feeling and soul and sense —
Merged in a moment which gives me at last
You around me for once, you beneath me, above me —
Me — sure that despite of time future, time past, —
This tick of our life-time's one moment you love me!
How long such suspension may linger? Ah, Sweet —
The moment eternal — just that and no more —
When ecstasy's utmost we clutch at the core
While cheeks burn, arms open, eyes shut and lips meet!

HUMILITY.

What girl but, having gathered flowers,
Stript the beds and spoilt the bowers,
From the lapful light she carries
Drops a careless bud? — nor tarries
To regain the waif and stray:
"Store enough for home" — she 'll say.

So say I too: give your lover
Heaps of loving — under, over,
Whelm him — make the one the wealthy!
Am I all so poor who — stealthy
Work it was! — picked up what fell:
Not the worst bud — who can tell?

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POETICS.

"So say the foolish!" Say the foolish so, Love?
"Flower she is, my rose" — or else, "My very swan is she"—
Or perhaps, "Yon maid-moon, blessing earth below, Love,
That art thou!" — to them, belike: no such vain words from me.

"Hush, rose, blush! no balm like breath," I chide it:
"Bend thy neck its best, swan, — hers the whiter curve!"
Be the moon the moon: my Love I place beside it:
What is she? Her human self, — no lower word will serve.

SUMMUM BONUM.

All the breath and the bloom of the year in the bag of one bee:
All the wonder and wealth of the mine in the heart of one gem:
In the core of one pearl all the shade and the shine of the sea:
Breath and bloom, shade and shine, — wonder, wealth, and — how far above them —
Truth, that's brighter than gem,
Trust, that's purer than pearl, —
Brightest truth, purest trust in the universe — all were for me
In the kiss of one girl.

A PEARL, A GIRL.

A simple ring with a single stone
To the vulgar eye no stone of price:
Whisper the right word, that alone —
Forth starts a sprite, like fire from ice,
And lo, you are lord (says an Eastern scroll)
Of heaven and earth, lord whole and sole
Through the power in a pearl.

A woman ('t is I this time that say)
With little the world counts worthy praise:
Utter the true word — out and away
Escapes her soul: I am wrapt in blaze,
Creation's lord, of heaven and earth
Lord whole and sole — by a minute's birth —
Through the love in a girl!

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SPECULATIVE.

Others may need new life in Heaven —
  Man, Nature, Art — made new, assume!
Man with new mind old sense to leaven,
  Nature, — new light to clear old gloom,
Art that breaks bounds, gets soaring-room.

I shall pray: "Fugitive as precious —
  Minutes which passed, — return, remain!
Let earth's old life once more enmesh us,
  You with old pleasure, me — old pain,
So we but meet nor part again!"

WHITE WITCHCRAFT.

If you and I could change to beasts, what beast should either be?
Shall you and I play Jove for once? Turn fox then, I decree!
Shy wild sweet stealer of the grapes! Now do your worst on me!

And thus you think to spite your friend — turned loathsome? What, a toad?
So, all men shrink and shun me! Dear men, pursue your road!
Leave but my crevice in the stone, a reptile's fit abode!

Now say your worst, Canidia! "He 's loathsome, I allow:
There may or may not lurk a pearl beneath his puckered brow:
But see his eyes that follow mine — love lasts there, anyhow."

BAD DREAMS. I.

Last night I saw you in my sleep:
  And how your charm of face was changed!
I asked, "Some love, some faith you keep?"
  You answered, "Faith gone, love estranged."

Whereat I woke — a twofold bliss:
  Waking was one, but next there came
This other: "Though I felt, for this,
  My heart break, I loved on the same."

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BAD DREAMS. II.

You in the flesh and here —
Your very self! Now, wait!
One word! May I hope or fear?
Must I speak in love or hate?
Stay while I ruminate!

The fact and each circumstance
Dare you disown? Not you!
That vast dome, that huge dance,
And the gloom which overgrew
A — possibly festive crew!

For why should men dance at all —
Why women — a crowd of both —
Unless they are gay? Strange ball —
Hands and feet plighting troth,
Yet partners enforced and loth!

Of who danced there, no shape
Did I recognize: thwart, perverse,
Each grasped each, past escape
In a whirl or weary or worse:
Man's sneer met woman's curse,

While he and she toiled as if
Their guardian set galley-slaves
To supple chained limbs grown stiff:
Unmanacled trulls and knaves —
The lash for who misbehaves!

And a gloom was, all the while,
Deeper and deeper yet
O'ergrowing the rank and file
Of that army of haters — set
To mimic love's fever-fret.

By the wall-side close I crept,
Avoiding the livid maze,
And, safely so far, outstepped
On a chamber — a chapel, says
My memory or betrays —

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Closet-like, kept aloof
  From unseemly witnessing
What sport made floor and roof
  Of the Devil's palace ring
While his Damned amused their king.

Ay, for a low lamp burned,
  And a silence lay about
What I, in the midst, discerned
  Though dimly till, past doubt.
'T was a sort of throne stood out —

High seat with steps, at least:
  And the topmost step was filled
By — whom? What vestured priest?
  A stranger to me, — his guild,
His cult, unreconciled

To my knowledge how guild and cult
  Are clothed in this world of ours:
I pondered, but no result
  Came to — unless that Giaours
So worship the Lower Powers.

When suddenly who entered?
  Who knelt — did you guess I saw?
Who — raising that face where centred
  Allegiance to love and law
So lately — off-casting awe,

Down-treading reserve, away
  Thrusting respect . . . but mine
Stands firm — firm still shall stay!
  Ask Satan! for I decline
To tell — what I saw, in fine!

Yet here in the flesh you come —
  Your same self, form and face, —
In the eyes, mirth still at home!
  On the lips, that commonplace
Perfection of honest grace!

Yet your errand is — needs must be —
  To palliate — well, explain,
Expurgate in some degree
  Your soul of its ugly stain.
Oh, you — the good in grain —

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How was it your white took tinge?
"A mere dream" — never object!
Sleep leaves a door on hinge
Whence soul, ere our flesh suspect,
Is off and away: detect

Her vagaries when loose, who can!
Be she pranksome, be she prude,
Disguise with the day began:
With the night — ah, what ensued
From draughts of a drink hell-brewed?

Then She: "What a queer wild dream!
And perhaps the best fun is —
Myself had its fellow — I seem
Scarce awake from yet. 'T was this —
Shall I tell you? First, a kiss!

"For the fault was just your own, —
'T is myself expect apology:
You warned me to let alone
(Since our studies were mere philology)
That ticklish (you said) Anthology.

"So I dreamed that I passed *exam*
Till a question posed me sore:
'Who translated this epigram
By — an author we best ignore?'
And I answered, 'Hannah More'!"

BAD DREAMS. III.

This was my dream: I saw a Forest
Old as the earth, no track nor trace
Of unmade man. Thou, Soul, explorest —
Though in a trembling rapture — space
Immeasurable! Shrubs, turned trees,
Trees that touch heaven, support its freize
Studded with sun and moon and star:
While — oh, the enormous growths that bar
Mine eye from penetrating past
Their tangled twine where lurks — nay, lives
Royally lone, some brute-type cast
I' the rough, time cancels, man forgives.

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On, Soul! I saw a lucid City
Of architectural device
Every way perfect. Pause for pity,
Lightning! nor leave a cicatrice
On those bright marbles, dome and spire,
Structures palatial, — streets which mire
Dares not defile, paved all too fine
For human footsteps' smirch, not thine —
Proud solitary traverser,
My Soul, of silent lengths of way —
With what ecstatic dread, aver,
Lest life start sanctioned by thy stay!

Ah, but the last sight was the hideous!
A City, yes, — a Forest, true, —
But each devouring each. Perfidious
Snake-plants had strangled what I knew
Was a pavilion once: each oak
Held on his horns some spoil he broke
By surreptitiously beneath
Upthrusting: pavements, as with teeth,
Griped huge weed widening crack and split
In squares and circles stone-work erst.
Oh, Nature — good! Oh, Art — no whit
Less worthy! Both in one — accurst!

BAD DREAMS. IV.

It happened thus: my slab, though new,
Was getting weather-stained, — beside,
Herbage, balm, peppermint o'ergrew
Letter and letter: till you tried
Somewhat, the Name was scarce descried.

That strong stern man my lover came:
— Was he my lover? Call him, pray,
My life's cold critic bent on blame
Of all poor I could do or say
To make me worth his love one day —

One far day when, by diligent
And dutiful amending faults,
Foibles, all weaknesses which went
To challenge and excuse assaults
Of culture wronged by taste that halts —

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Discrepancies should mar no plan
Symmetric of the qualities
Claiming respect from — say — a man
That 's strong and stern. "Once more he pries
Into me with those critic eyes!"

No question! so — "Conclude, condemn
Each failure my poor self avows!
Leave to its fate all you contemn!
There 's Solomon's selected spouse:
Earth needs must hold such maids — choose them!"

Why, he was weeping! Surely gone
Sternness and strength: with eyes to ground
And voice a broken monotone —
"Only be as you were! Abound
In foibles, faults, — laugh, robed and crowned

"As Folly's veriest queen, — care I
One feather-fluff? Look pity, Love,
On prostrate me — your foot shall try
This forehead's use — mount thence above,
And reach what Heaven you dignify!"

Now, what could bring such change about?
The thought perplexed: till, following
His gaze upon the ground, — why, out
Came all the secret! So, a thing
Thus simple has deposed my king!

For, spite of weeds that strove to spoil
Plain reading on the lettered slab,
My name was clear enough — no soil
Effaced the date when one chance stab
Of scorn . . . if only ghosts might blab!

INAPPREHENSIVENESS.

We two stood simply friend-like side by side,
Viewing a twilight country far and wide,
Till she at length broke silence. "How it towers
Yonder, the ruin o'er this vale of ours!
The West's faint flare behind it so relieves
Its rugged outline — sight perhaps deceives,
Or I could almost fancy that I see

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A branch wave plain — belike some wind-sown tree
Chance-rooted where a missing turret was.
What would I give for the perspective glass
At home, to make out if 't is really so!
Has Ruskin noticed here at Asolo
That certain weed-growths on the ravaged wall
Seem" . . . something that I could not say at all,
My thought being rather — as absorbed she sent
Look onward after look from eyes distent
With longing to reach Heaven's gate left ajar —
"Oh, fancies that might be, oh, facts that are!
What of a wilding? By you stands, and may
So stand unnoticed till the Judgment Day,
One who, if once aware that your regard
Claimed what his heart holds, — woke, as from its sward
The flower, the dormant passion, so to speak —
Then what a rush of life would startling wreak
Revenge on your inapprehensive stare
While, from the ruin and the West's faint flare,
You let your eyes meet mine, touch what you term
Quietude — that 's an universe in germ —
The dormant passion needing but a look
To burst into immense life!"
"No, the book
Which noticed how the wall-growths wave," said she,
"Was not by Ruskin."
I said, "Vernon Lee?"

WHICH?

So, the three Court-ladies began
Their trial of who judged best
In esteeming the love of a man:
Who preferred with most reason was thereby confessed
Boy-Cupid's exemplary catcher and cager;
An Abbé crossed legs to decide on the wager.

First the Duchesse: "Mine for me —
Who were it but God's for Him,
And the King's for — who but he?
Both faithful and loyal, one grace more shall brim
His cup with perfection: a lady's true lover,
He holds — save his God and his king — none above her."

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"I require" — outspoke the Marquise —
"Pure thoughts, ay, but also fine deeds:
Play the paladin must he, to please
My whim, and — to prove my knight's service exceeds
Your saint's and your loyalist's praying and kneeling —
Show wounds, each wide mouth to my mercy appealing."

Then the Comtesse: "My choice be a wretch,
Mere losel in body and soul,
Thrice accurst! What care I, so he stretch
Arms to me his sole saviour, love's ultimate goal,
Out of earth and men's noise — names of 'infidel,' 'traitor,
Cast up at him? Crown me, crown's adjudicator!"

And the Abbé uncrossed his legs,
Took snuff, a reflective pinch,
Broke silence: "The question begs
Much pondering ere I pronounce. Shall I flinch?
The love which to one and one only has reference
Seems terribly like what perhaps gains God's preference."

THE CARDINAL AND THE DOG.

Crescenzio, the Pope's Legate at the High Council, Trent,
— Year Fifteen hundred twenty-two, March Twenty-five — intent
On writing letters to the Pope till late into the night,
Rose, weary, to refresh himself, and saw a monstrous sight:
(I give mine Author's very words: he penned, I reindite.)

A black Dog of vast bigness, eyes flaming, ears that hung
Down to the very ground almost, into the chamber sprung
And made directly for him, and laid himself right under
The table where Crescenzio wrote — who called in fear and wonder
His servants in the ante-room, commanded every one
To look for and find out the beast: but, looking, they found none.

The Cardinal fell melancholy, then sick, soon after died:
And at Verona, as he lay on his death-bed, he cried
Aloud to drive away the Dog that leapt on his bedside.
Heaven keep us Protestants from harm: the rest .... no ill betide!

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THE POPE AND THE NET.

WHAT, he on whom our voices unanimously ran,
Made Pope at our last Conclave? Full low his life began:
His father earned the daily bread as just a fisherman.

So much the more his boy minds book, gives proof of mother-wit
Becomes first Deacon, and then Priest, then Bishop: see him sit
No less than Cardinal erelong, while no one cries "Unfit!"

But some one smirks, some other smiles, jogs elbow and nods head:
Each winks at each: "'I-faith, a rise! Saint Peter's net, instead
Of sword and keys, is come in vogue!" You think he blushes red?

Not he, of humble holy heart! "Unworthy me!" he sighs:
"From fisher's drudge to Church's prince — it is indeed a rise
So, here 's my way to keep the fact forever in my eyes!"

And straightway in his palace-hall, where commonly is set
Some coat-of-arms, some portraiture ancestral, lo, we met
His mean estate's reminder in his fisher-father's net!

Which step conciliates all and some, stops cavil in a trice:
"The humble holy heart that holds of new-born pride no spice!
He 's just the saint to choose for Pope!" Each adds, "'T is my advice."

So, Pope he was: and when we flocked — its sacred slipper on —
To kiss his foot, we lifted eyes, alack the thing was gone —
That guarantee of lowlihead, — eclipsed that star which shone!

Each eyed his fellow, one and all kept silence. I cried, "Pish!
I 'll make me spokesman for the rest, express the common wish.
Why, Father, is the net removed?" "Son, it hath caught the fish."

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THE BEAN-FEAST.

He was the man — Pope Sixtus, that Fifth, that swineherd's
son:
He knew the right thing, did it, and thanked God when 't was
done:
But of all he had to thank for, my fancy somehow leans
To thinking, what most moved him was a certain meal on beans.

For one day, as his wont was, in just enough disguise
As he went exploring wickedness, — to see with his own eyes
If law had due observance in the city's entrail dark
As well as where, i' the open, crime stood an obvious mark, —

He chanced, in a blind alley, on a tumble-down once house
Now hovel, vilest structure in Rome the ruinous:
And, as his tact impelled him, Sixtus adventured bold,
To learn how lowliest subjects bore hunger, toil, and cold.

There sat they at high-supper — man and wife, lad and lass,
Poor as you please, but cleanly all and care-free: pain that was
— Forgotten, pain as sure to be let bide aloof its time, —
Mightily munched the brave ones — what mattered gloom or
grime?

Said Sixtus, "Feast, my children! who works hard needs eat
well.
I 'm just a supervisor, would hear what you can tell.
Do any wrongs want righting? The Father tries his best,
But, since he 's only mortal, sends such as I to test
The truth of all that 's told him — how folk like you may fare:
Come! — only don't stop eating — when mouth has words to
spare —

"You" — smiled he — "play the spokesman, bell-wether of the
flock!
Are times good, masters gentle? Your grievances unlock!
How of your work and wages? — pleasures, if such may be —
Pains, as such are for certain." Thus smiling questioned he.

But somehow, spite of smiling, awe stole upon the group —
An inexpressible surmise: why should a priest thus stoop —
Pry into what concerned folk? Each visage fell. Aware,
Cries Sixtus interposing: "Nay, children, have no care!

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"Fear nothing! Who employs me requires the plain truth
Pelf
Beguiles who should inform me: so, I inform myself.
See!" And he threw his hood back, let the close vesture ope,
Showed face, and where on tippet the cross lay: 't was the Pope.

Imagine the joyful wonder! "How shall the like of us —
Poor souls — requite such blessing of our rude bean-feast?"
"Thus —
Thus amply!" laughed Pope Sixtus. "I early rise, sleep late:
Who works may eat: they tempt me, your beans there: spare
a plate!"

Down sat he on the door-step: 't was they this time said grace:
He ate up the last mouthful, wiped lips, and then, with face
Turned heavenward, broke forth thankful: "Not now, that
earth obeys
Thy word in mine, that through me the peoples know Thy
ways —

But that Thy care extendeth to Nature's homely wants,
And, while man's mind is strengthened, Thy goodness nowise
scants
Man's body of its comfort, — that I whom kings and queens
Crouch to, pick crumbs from off my table, relish beans!
The thunders I but seem to launch, there plain Thy hand all see:
That I have appetite, digest, and thrive — that boon 's for me."

MUCKLE-MOUTH MEG.

FROWNED the Laird on the Lord: "So, red-handed I catch thee?
Death-doomed by our Law of the Border!
We 've a gallows outside and a chiel to dispatch thee:
Who trespasses — hangs: all 's in order."

He met frown with smile, did the young English gallant:
Then the Laird's dame: "Nay, Husband, I beg!
He 's comely: be merciful! Grace for the callant
— If he marries our Muckle-mouth Meg!

"No mile-wide-mouthed monster of yours do I marry:
Grant rather the gallows!" laughed he.
"Foul fare kith and kin of you — why do you tarry?"
"To tame your fierce temper!" quoth she.

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"Shove him quick in the Hole, shut him fast for a week:
Cold, darkness, and hunger work wonders:
Who lion-like roars now, mouse-fashion will squeak,
And 'it rains' soon succeed to 'it thunders.'"

A week did he bide in the cold and the dark
—Not hunger: for duly at morning
In flitted a lass, and a voice like a lark
Chirped, "Muckle-mouth Meg still ye 're scorning?

"Go hang, but here 's parritch to hearten ye first!"
"Did Meg's muckle-mouth boast within some
Such music as yours, mine should match it or burst:
No frog-jaws! So tell folk, my Winsome!"

Soon week came to end, and, from Hole's door set wide,
Out he marched, and there waited the lassie:
"Yon gallows, or Muckle-mouth Meg for a bride!
Consider! Sky 's blue and turf 's grassy:

"Life 's sweet: shall I say ye wed Muckle-mouth Meg?"
"Not I," quoth the stout heart: "too eerie
The mouth that can swallow a bubblyjock's egg:
Shall I let it munch mine? Never, Dearie!

"Not Muckle-mouth Meg? Wow, the obstinate man!
Perhaps he would rather wed me!"
"Ay, would he — with just for a dowry your can!"
"I 'm Muckle-mouth Meg," chirruped she.

"Then so — so — so — so —" as he kissed her apace —
"Will I widen thee out till thou turnest
From Margaret Minnikin-mou', by God's grace,
To Muckle-mouth Meg in good earnest!"

ARCADES AMBO.

A. You blame me that I ran away?
Why, Sir, the enemy advanced:
Balls flew about, and — who can say
But one, if I stood firm, had glanced
In my direction? Cowardice?
I only know we don't live twice,
Therefore — shun death, is my advice.

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B. Shun death at all risks? Well, at some!
True, I myself, Sir, though I scold
The cowardly, by no means come
Under reproof as overbold
— I, who would have no end of brutes
Cut up alive to guess what suits
My case and saves my toe from shoots.

THE LADY AND THE PAINTER.

She. Yet womanhood you reverence,
So you profess!
He. With heart and soul.
She. Of which fact this is evidence!
To help Art-study, — for some dole
Of certain wretched shillings, — you
Induce a woman — virgin too —
To strip and stand stark-naked?
He. True.

She. Nor feel you so degrade her?
He. What
— (Excuse the interruption) — clings
Half-savage-like around your hat?
She. Ah, do they please you? Wild-bird-wings!
Next season, — Paris-prints assert, —
We must go feathered to the skirt:
My modiste keeps on the alert.

Owls, hawks, jays — swallows most approve.
He. Dare I speak plainly?
She. Oh, I trust!
He. Then, Lady Blanche, it less would move
In heart and soul of me disgust
Did you strip off those spoils you wear,
And stand — for thanks, not shillings — bare
To help Art like my Model there.
She well knew what absolved her — praise
In me for God's surpassing good,
Who granted to my reverent gaze
A type of purest womanhood.
You — clothed with murder of His best
Of harmless beings — stand the test!
What is it *you* know?
She. That you jest!

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PONTE DELL' ANGELO, VENICE.

Stop rowing! This one of our bye-canals
O'er a certain bridge you have to cross
That 's named, "Of the Angel": listen why!
The name "Of the Devil" too much appals
Venetian acquaintance, so — his the loss,
While the gain goes . . . look on high!

An angel visibly guards yon house:
Above each scutcheon — a pair — stands he,
Enfolds them with droop of either wing:
The family's fortune were perilous
Did he thence depart — you will soon agree,
If I hitch into verse the thing.

For, once on a time, this house belonged
To a lawyer of note, with law and to spare,
But also with overmuch lust of gain:
In the matter of law you were nowise wronged,
But alas for the lucre! He picked you bare
To the bone. Did folk complain?

"I exact," growled he, "work's rightful due:
'T is folk seek me, not I seek them.
Advice at its price! They succeed or fail,
Get law in each case — and a lesson too:
Keep clear of the Courts — is advice *ad rem:*
They 'll remember, I 'll be bail!"

So, he pocketed fee without a qualm.
What reason for squeamishness? Labor done,
To play he betook him with lightened heart,
Ate, drank, and made merry with song or psalm,
Since the yoke of the Church is an easy one —
Fits neck nor causes smart.

Brief: never was such an extortionate
Rascal — the word has escaped my teeth!
And yet — (all 's down in a book no ass
Indited, believe me!) — this reprobate
Was punctual at prayer-time: gold lurked beneath
Alloy of the rankest brass.

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For, play the extortioner as he might,
Fleece folk each day and all day long,
There was this redeeming circumstance:
He never lay down to sleep at night
But he put up a prayer first, brief yet strong,
"Our Lady avert mischance!"

Now it happened at close of a fructuous week
"I must ask," quoth he, "some Saint to dine:
I want that widow well out of my ears
With her ailing and wailing. Who bade her seek
Redress at my hands? 'She was wronged!' Folk whine
If to Law wrong right appears.

"Matteo da Bascio — he's my man!
No less than Chief of the Capucins:
His presence will surely suffumigate
My house — fools think lies under a ban
If somebody loses what somebody wins.
Hark, there he knocks at the grate!

"Come in, thou blessed of Mother Church!
I go and prepare — to bid, that is,
My trusty and diligent servitor
Get all things in readiness. Vain the search
Through Venice for one to compare with this
My model of ministrants: for —

"For — once again, nay, three times over,
My helpmate 's an ape! so intelligent,
I train him to drudge at household work:
He toils and he moils, I live in clover:
Oh, you shall see! There 's a goodly scent —
From his cooking, or I 'm a Turk!

"Scarce need to descend and supervise:
I 'll do it, however: wait here awhile!"
So, down to the kitchen gayly scuttles
Our host, nor notes the alarmed surmise
Of the holy man. "O depth of guile!
He blindly guzzles and guttles,

"While — who is it dresses the food and pours
The liquor? Some fiend — I make no doubt —
In likeness of — which of the loathly brutes?
An ape! Where hides he? No bull that gores,

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No bear that hugs — 't is the mock and flout
Of an ape, fiend's face that suits.

"So — out with thee, creature, wherever thou hidest!
I charge thee, by virtue of . . . right do I judge!
There skulks he perdue, crouching under the bed.
Well done! What, forsooth, in beast's shape thou confidest?
I know and would name thee but that I begrudge
Breath spent on such carrion. Instead —

"I adjure thee by ——" "Stay!" laughed the portent that rose
From floor up to ceiling: "No need to adjure!
See Satan in person, late ape by command
Of Him thou adjurest in vain. A saint's nose
Scents brimstone though incense be burned for a lure.
Yet, hence! for I 'm safe, understand!

"'T is my charge to convey to fit punishment's place
This lawyer, my liegeman, for cruelty wrought
On his clients, the widow and orphan, poor souls
He has plagued by exactions which proved law's disgrace,
Made equity void and to nothingness brought
God's pity. Fiends, on with fresh coals!"

"Stay!" nowise confounded, withstands Hell its match:
"How comes it, were truth in this story of thine,
God's punishment suffered a minute's delay?
Weeks, months have elapsed since thou squattedst at watch
For a spring on thy victim: what caused thee decline
Advantage till challenged to-day?"

"That challenge I meet with contempt," quoth the fiend.
"Thus much I acknowledge: the man 's armed in mail:
I wait till a joint 's loose, then quick ply my claws.
Thy friend's one good custom — he knows not — has screened
His flesh hitherto from what else would assail:
At 'Save me, Madonna!' I pause.

"That prayer did the losel but once pretermit,
My pounce were upon him. I keep me attent:
He 's in safety but till he 's caught napping. Enough!"
"Ay, enough!" smiles the Saint — "for the biter is bit,
The spy caught in somnolence. Vanish! I 'm sent
To smooth up what fiends do in rough."

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"I vanish? Through wall or through roof?" the ripost
Grinned gayly. "My orders were — 'Leave not unharmed
The abode of this lawyer! Do damage to prove
'T was for something thou quittedst the land of the lost —
To add to their number this unit!' Though charmed
From descent there, on earth that 's above

"I may haply amerce him." "So do, and begone,
I command thee! For, look! Though there 's doorway behind
And window before thee, go straight through the wall,
Leave a breach in the brickwork, a gap in the stone
For who passes to stare at!" "Spare speech! I 'm resigned:
Here goes!" roared the goblin, as all —

Wide bat-wings, spread arms and legs, tail out a-stream,
Crash obstacles went, right and left, as he soared
Or else sank, was clean gone through the hole anyhow.
The Saint returned thanks: then a satisfied gleam
On the bald polished pate showed that triumph was scored.
"To dinner with appetite now!"

Down he trips. "In good time!" smirks the host. "Didst thou scent
Rich savor of roast meat? Where hides he, my ape?
Look alive, be alert! He 's away to wash plates.
Sit down, Saint! What 's here? Dost examine a rent
In the napkin thou twistest and twirlest? Agape . . .
Ha, blood is it drips nor abates

"From thy wringing a cloth, late was lavendered fair?
What means such a marvel?" "Just this does it mean:
I convince and convict thee of sin!" answers straight
The Saint, wringing on, wringing ever — O rare! —
Blood — blood from a napery snow not more clean.
"A miracle shows thee thy state!

"See — blood thy extortions have wrung from the flesh
Of thy clients who, sheep-like, arrived to be shorn,
And left thee — or fleeced to the quick or so flayed
That, behold, their blood gurgles and grumbles afresh
To accuse thee! Ay, down on thy knees, get up sworn
To restore! Restitution once made,

"Sin no more! Dost thou promise? Absolved, then, arise!
Upstairs follow me! Art amazed at yon breach?
Who battered and shattered and scattered, escape

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From thy purlieus obtaining? That Father of Lies
Thou wast wont to extol for his feats, all and each
The Devil 's disguised as thine ape!"

Be sure that our lawyer was torn by remorse,
Shed tears in a flood, vowed and swore so to alter
His ways that how else could our Saint but declare
He was cleansed of past sin? "For sin future — fare worse
Thou undoubtedly wilt," warned the Saint, "shouldst thou falter
One whit!" "Oh, for that have no care!

"I am firm in my purposed amendment. But, prithee,
Must ever affront and affright me yon gap?
Who made it for exit may find it of use
For entrance as easy. If, down in his smithy
He forges me fetters — when heated, mayhap,
He 'll up with an armful! Broke loose —

"How bar him out henceforth?" "Judiciously urged!"
Was the good man's reply. "How to baulk him is plain.
There 's nothing the Devil objects to so much,
So speedily flies from, as one of those purged
Of his presence, the angels who erst formed his train —
His, their emperor. Choose one of such!

"Get fashioned his likeness and set him on high
At back of the breach thus adroitly filled up:
Display him as guard of two scutcheons, thy arms:
I warrant no devil attempts to get by
And disturb thee so guarded. Eat, drink, dine, and sup,
In thy rectitude, safe from alarms!"

So said and so done. See, the angel has place
Where the Devil has passage! All 's down in a book.
Gainsay me? Consult it! Still faithless? Trust *me?*
Trust Father Boverio who gave me the case
In his Annals — gets of it, by hook or by crook,
Two confirmative witnesses: three

Are surely enough to establish an act:
And thereby we learn — would we ascertain truth —
To trust wise tradition which took, at the time,
Note that served till slow history ventured on fact,
Though folk have their fling at tradition forsooth!
Row, boys, fore and aft, rhyme and chime!

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BEATRICE SIGNORINI.

This strange thing happened to a painter once:
Viterbo boasts the man among her sons
Of note, I seem to think: his ready tool
Picked up its precepts in Cortona's school—
That's Pietro Berretini, whom they call
Cortona, these Italians: greatish-small,
Our painter was his pupil, by repute
His match if not his master absolute,
Though whether he spoiled fresco more or less,
And what's its fortune, scarce repays your guess.
Still, for one circumstance, I save his name
— Francesco Romanelli: do the same!
He went to Rome and painted: there he knew
A wonder of a woman painting too —
For she, at least, was no Cortona's drudge:
Witness that ardent fancy-shape — I judge
A semblance of her soul — she called, "Desire"
With starry front for guide, where sits the fire
She left to brighten Buonarroti's house.
If you see Florence, pay that piece your vows,
Though blockhead Baldinucci's mind, imbued
With monkish morals, bade folk "Drape the nude
And stop the scandal!" quoth the record prim
I borrow this of: hang his book and him!
At Rome, then, where these fated ones met first,
The blossom of his life had hardly burst
While hers was blooming at full beauty's stand:
No less Francesco — when half-ripe he scanned
Consummate Artemisia — grew one want
To have her his and make her ministrant
With every gift of body and of soul
To him. In vain. Her sphery self was whole —
Might only touch his orb at Art's sole point.
Suppose he could persuade her to enjoint
Her life — past, present, future — all in his
At Art's sole point by some explosive kiss
Of love through lips, would love's success defeat
Artistry's haunting curse — the Incomplete?
Artists no doubt they both were, — what beside
Was she? who long had felt heart, soul spread wide
Her life out, knowing much and loving well,
On either side Art's narrow space where fell
Reflection from his own speck: but the germ

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Of individual genius — what we term
The very self, the God-gift whence had grown
Heart's life and soul's life — how make that his own?
Vainly his Art, reflected, smiled in small
On Art's one facet of her ampler ball;
The rest, touch-free, took in, gave back heaven, earth,
All where he was not. Hope, well-nigh ere birth
Came to Desire, died off all-unfulfilled.
"What though in Art I stand the abler-skilled,"
(So he conceited: mediocrity
Turns on itself the self-transforming eye)
"If only Art were suing, mine would plead
To purpose: man — by nature I exceed
Woman the bounded: but how much beside
She boasts, would sue in turn and be denied!
Love her? My own wife loves me in a sort
That suits us both: she takes the world's report
Of what my work is worth, and, for the rest,
Concedes that, while his consort keeps her nest,
The eagle soars a licensed vagrant, lives
A wide free life which she at least forgives —
Good Beatricé Signorini! Well
And wisely did I choose her. But the spell
To subjugate this Artemisia — where?
She passionless? — she resolute to care
Nowise beyond the plain sufficiency
Of fact that she is she and I am I
— Acknowledged arbitrator for us both
In her life as in mine which she were loth
Even to learn the laws of? No, and no,
Twenty times over! Ay, it must be so:
I for myself, alas!"
Whereon, instead
Of the checked lover's-utterance — why, he said
— Leaning over her easel: "Flesh is red"
(Or some such just remark) — "by no means white
As Guido's practice teaches: you are right."
Then came the better impulse: "What if pride
Were wisely trampled on, whate'er betide?
If I grow hers, not mine — join lives, confuse
Bodies and spirits, gain her not but lose
Myself to Artemisia? That were love!
Of two souls — one must bend, one rule above:
If I crouch under proudly, lord turned slave,
Were it not worthier both than if she gave
Herself — in treason to herself — to me?"

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And, all the while, he felt it could not be.
Such love were true love: love that way who can!
Some one that 's born half woman not whole man:
For man, prescribed man better or man worse,
Why, whether microcosm or universe,
What law prevails alike through great and small,
The world and man — world's miniature we call?
Male is the master. "That way" — smiled and sighed
Our true male estimator — "puts her pride
My wife in making me the outlet whence
She learns all Heaven allows: 't is my pretence
To paint: her lord should do what else but paint?
Do I break brushes, cloister me turned saint?
Then, best of all suits sanctity her spouse
Who acts for Heaven, allows and disallows
At pleasure, past appeal, the right, the wrong
In all things. That 's my wife's way. But this strong
Confident Artemisia — an adept
In Art does she conceit herself? 'Except
In just this instance,' tell her, 'no one draws
More rigidly observant of the laws
Of right design: yet here, — permit me hint, —
If the acromion had a deeper dint,
That shoulder were perfection.' What surprise
— Nay scorn, shoots black fire from those startled eyes!
She to be lessoned in design forsooth!
I 'm doomed and done for, since I spoke the truth.
Make my own work the subject of dispute —
Fails it of just perfection absolute
Somewhere? Those motors, flexors, — don't I know
Ser Santi, styled 'Tirititototo
The pencil-prig,' might blame them? Yet my wife —
Were he and his nicknamer brought to life,
Tito and Titian, to pronounce again —
Ask her who knows more — I or the great Twain,
Our colorist and draughtsman!
"I help her,
Not she helps me; and neither shall demur
Because my portion is" — he chose to think —
"Quite other than a woman's: I may drink
At many waters, must repose by none —
Rather arise and fare forth, having done
Duty to one new excellence the more,
Abler thereby, though impotent before
So much was gained of knowledge. Best depart,
From this last lady I have learned my heart!"

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Thus he concluded of himself — resigned
To play the man and master: "Man boasts mind:
Woman, man's sport calls mistress, to the same
Does body's suit and service. Would she claim
— My placid Beatricé-wife — pretence
Even to blame her lord if, going hence,
He wistfully regards one whom — did fate
Concede — he might accept queen, abdicate
Kingship because of? — one of no meek sort
But masterful as he: man's match in short?
Oh, there 's no secret I were best conceal!
Bicé shall know; and should a stray tear steal
From out the blue eye, stain the rose cheek — bah!
A smile, a word's gay reassurance — ah,
With kissing interspersed, — shall make amends,
Turn pain to pleasure."
"What, in truth, so ends
Abruptly, do you say, our intercourse?"
Next day, asked Artemisia: "I 'll divorce
Husband and wife no longer. Go your ways,
Leave Rome! Viterbo owns no equal, says
The bye-word, for fair women: you, no doubt,
May boast a paragon all specks without,
Using the painter's privilege to choose
Among what 's rarest. Will your wife refuse
Acceptance from — no rival — of a gift?
You paint the human figure I make shift
Humbly to reproduce: but, in my hours
Of idlesse, what I fain would paint is — flowers.
Look now!"
She twitched aside a veiling cloth.
"Here is my keepsake — frame and picture both:
For see, the frame is all of flowers festooned
About an empty space, — left thus, to wound
No natural susceptibility:
How can I guess? 'T is you must fill, not I,
The central space with — her whom you like best!
That is your business, mine has been the rest.
But judge!"
How judge them? Each of us, in flowers,
Chooses his love, allies it with past hours,
Old meetings, vanished forms and faces: no —
Here let each favorite unmolested blow
For one heart's homage, no tongue's banal praise,
Whether the rose appealingly bade "Gaze
Your fill on me, sultana who dethrone

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The gaudy tulip!" or 't was "Me alone
Rather do homage to, who lily am,
No unabashed rose!" "Do I vainly cram
My cup with sweets, your jonquil?" "Why forget
Vernal endearments with the violet?"
So they contested yet concerted, all
As one, to circle round about, enthral
Yet, self-forgetting, push to prominence
The midmost wonder, gained no matter whence.
There 's a tale extant, in a book I conned
Long years ago, which treats of things beyond
The common, antique times and countries queer
And customs strange to match. "'T is said, last year,"
(Recounts my author) "that the King had mind
To view his kingdom — guessed at from behind
A palace-window hitherto. Announced
No sooner was such purpose than 't was pounced
Upon by all the ladies of the land —
Loyal but light of life: they formed a band
Of loveliest ones but lithest also, since
Proudly they all combined to bear their prince.
Backs joined to breasts, — arms, legs, — nay, ankles, wrists,
Hands, feet, I know not by what turns and twists,
So interwoven lay that you believed
'T was one sole beast of burden which received
The monarch on its back, of breadth not scant,
Since fifty girls made one white elephant."
So with the fifty flowers which shapes and hues
Blent, as I tell, and made one fast yet loose
Mixture of beauties, composite, distinct
No less in each combining flower that linked
With flower to form a fit environment
For — whom might be the painter's heart's intent
Thus, in the midst enhaloed, to enshrine?
"This glory-guarded middle space — is mine?
For me to fill?"
"For you, my Friend! We part,
Never perchance to meet again. Your Art —
What if I mean it — so to speak — shall wed
My own, be witness of the life we led
When sometimes it has seemed our souls near found
Each one the other as its mate — unbound
Had yours been haply from the better choice
— Beautiful Bicé: 't is the common voice,
The crowning verdict. Make whom you like best
Queen of the central space, and manifest

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Your predilection for what flower beyond
All flowers finds favor with you. I am fond
Of — say — yon rose's rich predominance,
While you — what wonder? — more affect the glance
The gentler violet from its leafy screen
Ventures: so — choose your flower and paint your queen

Oh but the man was ready, head as hand,
Instructed and adroit. "Just as you stand,
Stay and be made — would Nature but relent —
By Art immortal!"
Every implement
In tempting reach — a palette primed, each squeeze
Of oil-paint in its proper patch — with these,
Brushes, a veritable sheaf to grasp!
He worked as he had never dared.
"Unclasp
My Art from yours who can!" — he cried at length,
As down he threw the pencil — "Grace from Strength
Dissociate, from your flowery fringe detach
My face of whom it frames, — the feat will match
With that of Time should Time from me extract
Your memory, Artemisia!" And in fact,—
What with the pricking impulse, sudden glow
Of soul — head, hand coöperated so
That face was worthy of its frame, 't is said —
Perfect, suppose!
They parted. Soon instead
Of Rome was home, — of Artemisia — well,
The placid-perfect wife. And it befell
That after the first incontestably
Blessedest of all blisses (— wherefore try
Your patience with embracings and the rest
Due from Calypso's all-unwilling guest
To his Penelope?) — there somehow came
The coolness which as duly follows flame.
So, one day, "What if we inspect the gifts
My Art has gained us?"
Now the wife uplifts
A casket-lid, now tries a medal's chain
Round her own lithe neck, fits a ring in vain
— Too loose on the fine finger, — vows and swears
The jewel with two pendent pearls like pears
Betters a lady's bosom — witness else!
And so forth, while Ulysses smiles.

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"Such spells
Subdue such natures — sex must worship toys
— Trinkets and trash: yet, ah, quite other joys
Must stir from sleep the passionate abyss
Of — such an one as her I know — not this
My gentle consort with the milk for blood!
Why, did it chance that in a careless mood
(In those old days, gone — never to return —
When we talked — she to teach and I to learn)
I dropped a word, a hint which might imply
Consorts exist — how quick flashed fire from eye,
Brow blackened, lip was pinched by furious lip!
I needed no reminder of my slip:
One warning taught me wisdom. Whereas here . . ."
Aha, a sportive fancy! Eh, what fear
Of harm to follow? Just a whim indulged!
"My Beatricé, there 's an undivulged
Surprise in store for you: the moment 's fit
For letting loose a secret: out with it!
Tributes to worth, you rightly estimate
These gifts of Prince and Bishop, Church and State:
Yet, may I tell you? Tastes so disagree!
There 's one gift, preciousest of all to me,
I doubt if you would value as well worth
The obvious sparkling gauds that men unearth
For toy-cult mainly of you womankind;
Such make you marvel, I concede: while blind
The sex proves to the greater marvel here
I veil to baulk its envy. Be sincere!
Say, should you search creation far and wide,
Was ever face like this?"

He drew aside
The veil, displayed the flower-framed portrait kept
For private delectation.
No adept
In florist's lore more accurately named
And praised or, as appropriately, blamed
Specimen after specimen of skill,
Than Bicé. "Rightly placed the daffodil —
Scarcely so right the blue germander. Gray
Good mouse-ear! Hardly your auricula
Is powdered white enough. It seems to me
Scarlet not crimson, that anemone:
But there 's amends in the pink saxifrage.
O darling dear ones, let me disengage

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You innocents from what your harmlessness
Clasps lovingly! Out thou from their caress,
Serpent!"
Whereat forth-flashing from her coils
On coils of hair, the *spilla* in its toils
Of yellow wealth, the dagger-plaything kept
To pin its plaits together, life-like leapt
And — woe to all inside the coronal!
Stab followed stab, — cut, slash, she ruined all
The masterpiece. Alack for eyes and mouth
And dimples and endearment — North and South,
East, West, the tatters in a fury flew:
There yawned the circlet. What remained to do?
She flung the weapon, and, with folded arms
And mien defiant of such low alarms
As death and doom beyond death, Bicé stood
Passively statuesque, in quietude
Awaiting judgment.
And out judgment burst
With frank unloading of love's laughter, first
Freed from its unsuspected source. Some throe
Must needs unlock love's prison-bars, let flow
The joyance.

"Then you ever were, still are,
And henceforth shall be — no occulted star
But my resplendent Bicé, sun-revealed,
Full-rondure! Woman-glory unconcealed,
So front me, find and claim and take your own —
My soul and body yours and yours alone,
As you are mine, mine wholly! Heart's love, take —
Use your possession — stab or stay at will
Here — hating, saving — woman with the skill
To make man beast or god!"
And so it proved:
For, as beseemed new godship, thus he loved,
Past power to change, until his dying-day, —
Good fellow! And I fain would hope — some say
Indeed for certain — that our painter's toils
At fresco-splashing, finer stroke in oils,
Were not so mediocre after all;
Perhaps the work appears unduly small
From having loomed too large in old esteem,
Patronized by late Papacy. I seem
Myself to have cast eyes on certain work
In sundry galleries, no judge needs shirk

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From moderately praising. He designed
Correctly, nor in color lagged behind
His age: but both in Florence and in Rome
The elder race so make themselves at home
That scarce we give a glance to ceilingfuls
Of such like as Francesco. Still, one culls
From out the heaped laudations of the time
The pretty incident I put in rhyme.

FLUTE-MUSIC, WITH AN ACCOMPANIMENT

He. Ah, the bird-like fluting
Through the ash-tops yonder —
Bullfinch-bubblings, soft sounds suiting
What sweet thoughts, I wonder?
Fine-pearled notes that surely
Gather, dewdrop-fashion,
Deep-down in some heart which purely
Secretes globuled passion —
Passion insuppressive —
Such is piped, for certain;
Love, no doubt, nay, love excessive
'T is, your ash-tops curtain.

Would your ash-tops open
We might spy the player —
Seek and find some sense which no pen
Yet from singer, sayer,
Ever has extracted:
Never, to my knowledge.
Yet has pedantry enacted
That, in Cupid's College,
Just this variation
Of the old old yearning
Should by plain speech have salvation,
Yield new men new learning.

"Love!" but what love, nicely
New from old disparted,
Would the player teach precisely?
First of all, he started
In my brain Assurance —
Trust — entire Contentment —
Passion proved by much endurance;
Then came — not resentment,

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No, but simply Sorrow:
What was seen had vanished:
Yesterday so blue! To-morrow
Blank, all sunshine banished.

Hark! 'T is Hope resurges,
Struggling through obstruction —
Forces a poor smile which verges
On Joy's introduction.
Now, perhaps, mere Musing:
"Holds earth such a wonder?
Fairy-mortal, soul-sense-fusing
Past thought's power to sunder!"
What? calm Acquiescence?
"Daisied turf gives room to
Trefoil, plucked once in her presence —
Growing by her tomb too!"

She. All 's your fancy-spinning!
Here 's the fact: a neighbor
Never-ending, still beginning,
Recreates his labor:
Deep o'er desk he drudges,
Adds, divides, subtracts and
Multiplies, until he judges
Noonday-hour's exact sand
Shows the hour-glass emptied:
Then comes lawful leisure,
Minutes rare from toil exempted,
Fit to spend in pleasure.

Out then with — what treatise?
Youth's Complete Instructor
How to play the Flute. Quid petis?
Follow Youth's conductor
On and on, through *Easy*,
Up to *Harder, Hardest*
Flute-piece, till thou, flautist wheezy,
Possibly discardest
Tootlings hoarse and husky,
Mayst expend with courage
Breath — on tunes once bright now dusky —
Meant to cool thy porridge.

That 's an air of Tulou's
He maltreats persistent,

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Till as lief I 'd hear some Zulu's
Bone-piped bag, breath-distent,
Madden native dances.
I 'm the man's familiar:
Unexpectedness enhances
What your ear's auxiliar
— Fancy — finds suggestive.
Listen! That 's *legato*
Rightly played, his fingers restive
Touch as if *staccato*.

He. Ah, you trick-betrayer!
Telling tales, unwise one?
So the secret of the player
Was — he could surprise one
Well-nigh into trusting
Here was a musician
Skilled consummately, yet lusting
Through no vile ambition
After making captive
All the world, — rewarded
Amply by one stranger's rapture,
Common praise discarded.

So, without assistance
Such as music rightly
Needs and claims, — defying distance,
Overleaping lightly
Obstacles which hinder, —
He, for my approval,
All the same and all the kinder
Made mine what might move all
Earth to kneel adoring:
Took — while he piped Gounod's
Bit of passionate imploring —
Me for Juliet: who knows?

No! as you explain things,
All 's mere repetition,
Practise-pother: of all vain things
Why waste pooh or pish on
Toilsome effort — never
Ending, still beginning —
After what should pay endeavor
— Right-performance? winning

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Weariness from you who,
Ready to admire some
Owl's fresh hooting — Tu-whit, tu-who —
Find stale thrush-songs tiresome.

She. Songs, Spring thought perfection,
Summer criticises:
What in May escaped detection,
August, past surprises,
Notes, and names each blunder.
You, the just-initiate,
Praise to heart's content (what wonder?)
Tootings I hear vitiate
Romeo's serenading —
I who, times full twenty,
Turned to ice — no ash-tops aiding —
At his *caldamente.*

So, 't was distance altered
Sharps to flats? The missing
Bar when syncopation faltered
(You thought — paused for kissing!)
Ash-tops too felonious
Intercepted? Rather
Say — they well-nigh made euphonious
Discord, helped to gather
Phrase, by phrase, turn patches
Into simulated
Unity which botching matches, —
Scraps redintegrated.

He. Sweet, are you suggestive
Of an old suspicion
Which has always found me restive
To its admonition
When it ventured whisper
"Fool, the strifes and struggles
Of your trembler — blusher — lisper
Were so many juggles,
Tricks tried — oh, so often! —
Which once more do duty,
Find again a heart to soften,
Soul to snare with beauty."

Birth-blush of the briar-rose,
Mist-bloom of the hedge-sloe,

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Some one gains the prize: admire rose
Would he, when noon's wedge — slow —
Sure, has pushed, expanded
Rathe pink to raw redness?
Would he covet sloe when sanded
By road-dust to deadness?
So — restore their value!
Ply a water-sprinkle!
Then guess sloe is fingered, shall you?
Find in rose a wrinkle?

Here what played Aquarius?
Distance — ash-tops aiding,
Reconciled scraps else contrarious,
Brightened stuff fast fading.
Distance — call your shyness:
Was the fair one peevish?
Coyness softened out of slyness.
Was she cunning, thievish,
All-but-proved impostor?
Bear but one day's exile,
Ugly traits were wholly lost or
Screened by fancies flexile —

Ash-tops these, you take me?
Fancies' interference
Changed . . .
But since I sleep, don't wake me!
What if all 's appearance?
Is not outside seeming
Real as substance inside?
Both are facts, so leave me dreaming:
If who loses wins I 'd
Ever lose, — conjecture,
From one phrase trilled deftly,
All the piece. So, end your lecture,
Let who lied be left lie!

"IMPERANTE AUGUSTO NATUS EST—"

What it was struck the terror into me?
This, Publius: closer! while we wait our turn
I 'll tell you. Water 's warm (they ring inside)
At the eighth hour, till when no use to bathe.

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Here in the vestibule where now we sit,
One scarce stood yesterday, the throng was such
Of loyal gapers, folk all eye and ear
While Lucius Varius Rufus in their midst
Read out that long-planned late-completed piece,
His Panegyric on the Emperor.

"Nobody like him," little Flaccus laughed,
"At leading forth an Epos with due pomp!
Only, when godlike Cæsar swells the theme,
How should mere mortals hope to praise aright?
Tell me, thou offshoot of Etruscan kings!"
Whereat Mæcenas smiling sighed assent.

I paid my quadrans, left the Thermæ's roar
Of rapture as the poet asked, "What place
Among the godships Jove, for Cæsar's sake,
Would bid its actual occupant vacate
In favor of the new divinity?"
And got the expected answer, "Yield thine own!"—
Jove thus dethroned, I somehow wanted air,
And found myself a-pacing street and street,
Letting the sunset, rosy over Rome,
Clear my head dizzy with the hubbub — say,
As if thought's dance therein had kicked up dust
By trampling on all else: the world lay prone,
As — poet-propped, in brave hexameters —
Their subject triumphed up from man to God.
Caius Octavius Cæsar the August —
Where was escape from his prepotency?
I judge I may have passed — how many piles
Of structure dropt like doles from his free hand
To Rome on every side? Why, right and left,
For temples you 've the Thundering Jupiter,
Avenging Mars, Apollo Palatine:
How count Piazza, Forum — there 's a third
All but completed. You 've the Theatre
Named of Marcellus — all his work, such work! —
One thought still ending, dominating all —
With warrant Varius sang, "Be Cæsar God!"
By what a hold arrests he Fortune's wheel,
Obtaining and retaining heaven and earth
Through Fortune, if you like, but favor — no!
For the great deeds flashed by me, fast and thick
As stars which storm the sky on autumn nights —
Those conquests! but peace crowned them, — so, of peace

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Count up his titles only — these, in few —
Ten years Triumvir, Consul thirteen times,
Emperor, nay — the glory topping all —
Hailed Father of his Country, last and best
Of titles, by himself accepted so:
And why not? See but feats achieved in Rome —
Not to say, Italy — he planted there
Some thirty colonies — but Rome itself
All new-built, "marble now, brick once," he boasts:
This Portico, that Circus. Would you sail?
He has drained Tiber for you: would you walk?
He straightened out the long Flaminian Way.
Poor? Profit by his score of donatives!
Rich — that is, mirthful? Half-a-hundred games
Challenge your choice! There 's Rome — for you and me
Only? The centre of the world besides!
For, look the wide world over, where ends Rome?
To sunrise? There 's Euphrates — all between!
To sunset? Ocean and immensity:
North, stare till Danube stops you: South, see Nile,
The Desert and the earth-upholding Mount.
Well may the poet-people each with each
Vie in his praise, our company of swans,
Virgil and Horace, singers — in their way —
Nearly as good as Varius, though less famed:
Well may they cry, "No mortal, plainly God!"

Thus to myself myself said, while I walked:
Or would have said, could thought attain to speech,
Clean baffled by enormity of bliss
The while I strove to scale its heights and sound
Its depths — this masterdom o'er all the world
Of one who was but born — like you, like me,
Like all the world he owns — of flesh and blood.
But he — how grasp, how gauge his own conceit
Of bliss to me near inconceivable?
Or, since such flight too much makes reel the brain,
Let 's sink — and so take refuge, as it were,
From life's excessive altitude — to life's
Breathable wayside shelter at its base!
If looms thus large this Cæsar to myself
— Of senatorial rank and somebody —
How must he strike the vulgar nameless crowd,
Innumerous swarm that 's nobody at all?
Why, — for an instance, — much as yon gold shape
Crowned, sceptred, on the temple opposite —

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Fulgurant Jupiter — must daze the sense
Of — say, yon outcast begging from its step!
"What, anti-Cæsar, monarch in the mud,
As he is pinnacled above thy pate?
Ay, beg away! thy lot contrasts full well
With his whose bounty yields thee this support —
Our Holy and Inviolable One,
Cæsar, whose bounty built the fane above!
Dost read my thought? Thy garb, alack, displays
Sore usage truly in each rent and stain —
Faugh! Wash though in Suburra! 'Ware the dogs
Who may not so disdain a meal on thee!
What, stretchest forth a palm to catch my alms?
Aha, why yes: I must appear — who knows? —
I, in my toga, to thy rags and thee —
Quæstor — nay, Ædile, Censor — Pol! perhaps
The very City-Prætor's noble self!
As to me Cæsar, so to thee am I?
Good: nor in vain shall prove thy quest, poor rogue!
Hither — hold palm out — take this quarter-as!"

And who did take it? As he raised his head,
(My gesture was a trifle — well abrupt,)
Back fell the broad flap of the peasant's-hat,
The homespun cloak that muffled half his cheek
Dropped somewhat, and I had a glimpse — just one!
One was enough. Whose — whose might be the face?
That unkempt careless hair — brown, yellowish —
Those sparkling eyes beneath their eyebrows' ridge
(Each meets each, and the hawk-nose rules between)
— That was enough, no glimpse was needed more!
And terrifyingly into my mind
Came that quick-hushed report was whispered us,
They do say, once a year in sordid garb
He plays the mendicant, sits all day long,
Asking and taking alms of who may pass,
And so averting, if submission help,
Fate's envy, the dread chance and change of things
When Fortune — for a word, a look, a naught —
Turns spiteful and — the petted lioness —
Strikes with her sudden paw, and prone falls each
Who patted late her neck superiorly,
Or trifled with those claw-tips velvet-sheathed."
He's God!" shouts Lucius Varius Rufus: "Man
And worms'-meat any moment!" mutters low
Some Power, admonishing the mortal-born.

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Ay, do you mind? There 's meaning in the fact
That whoso conquers, triumphs, enters Rome,
Climbing the Capitolian, soaring thus
To glory's summit, — Publius, do you mark —
Ever the same attendant who, behind,
Above the Conqueror's head supports the crown
All-too-demonstrative for human wear,
— One hand's employment — all the while reserves
Its fellow, backward flung, to point how, close
Appended from the car, beneath the foot
Of the up-borne exulting Conqueror,
Frown — half-descried — the instruments of shame,
The malefactor's due. Crown, now — Cross, when?

Who stands secure? Are even Gods so safe?
Jupiter that just now is dominant —
Are not there ancient dismal tales how once
A predecessor reigned ere Saturn came,
And who can say if Jupiter be last?
Was it for nothing the gray Sibyl wrote
"Cæsar Augustus regnant, shall be born
In blind Judæa" — one to master him,
Him and the universe? An old-wife's tale?

Bath-drudge! Here, slave! No cheating! Our turn next.
No loitering, or be sure you taste the lash!
Two strigils, two oil-drippers, each a sponge!

DEVELOPMENT.

My Father was a scholar and knew Greek.
When I was five years old, I asked him once
"What do you read about?"
"The siege of Troy."
"What is a siege, and what is Troy?"
Whereat
He piled up chairs and tables for a town,
Set me a-top for Priam, called our cat
— Helen, enticed away from home (he said)
By wicked Paris, who couched somewhere close
Under the footstool, being cowardly,
But whom — since she was worth the pains, poor puss —
Towzer and Tray, — our dogs, the Atreidai, — sought
By taking Troy to get possession of
— Always when great Achilles ceased to sulk,

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(My pony in the stable) — forth would prance
And put to flight Hector — our page-boy's self.
This taught me who was who and what was what:
So far I rightly understood the case
At five years old: a huge delight it proved
And still proves — thanks to that instructor sage
My Father, who knew better than turn straight
Learning's full flare on weak-eyed ignorance,
Or, worse yet, leave weak eyes to grow sand-blind,
Content with darkness and vacuity.

It happened, two or three years afterward,
That — I and playmates playing at Troy's Siege —
My Father came upon our make-believe.
"How would you like to read yourself the tale
Properly told, of which I gave you first
Merely such notion as a boy could bear?
Pope, now, would give you the precise account
Of what, some day, by dint of scholarship,
You 'll hear — who knows? — from Homer's very mouth.
Learn Greek by all means, read the 'Blind Old Man,
Sweetest of Singers' — *tuphlos* which means 'blind,'
Hedistos which means 'sweetest.' Time enough!
Try, anyhow, to master him some day;
Until when, take what serves for substitute,
Read Pope, by all means!"
So I ran through Pope,
Enjoyed the tale — what history so true?
Also attacked my Primer, duly drudged,
Grew fitter thus for what was promised next —
The very thing itself, the actual words,
When I could turn — say, Buttmann to account.

Time passed, I ripened somewhat: one fine day,
"Quite ready for the Iliad, nothing less?
There 's Heine, where the big books block the shelf:
Don't skip a word, thumb well the Lexicon!"

I thumbed well and skipped nowise till I learned
Who was who, what was what, from Homer's tongue,
And there an end of learning. Had you asked
The all-accomplished scholar, twelve years old,
"Who was it wrote the Iliad?" — what a laugh!
"Why, Homer, all the world knows: of his life
Doubtless some facts exist: it 's everywhere:
We have not settled, though, his place of birth:

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He begged, for certain, and was blind beside:
Seven cities claimed him — Scio, with best right,
Thinks Byron. What he wrote? Those Hymns we have.
Then there 's the 'Battle of the Frogs and Mice,'
That 's all — unless they dig 'Margites' up
(I 'd like that) nothing more remains to know."
Thus did youth spend a comfortable time;
Until — "What 's this the Germans say is fact
That Wolf found out first? It 's unpleasant work
Their chop and change, unsettling one's belief:
All the same, where we live, we learn, that 's sure."
So. I bent brow o'er *Prolegomena*.

And, after Wolf, a dozen of his like
Proved there was never any Troy at all,
Neither Besiegers nor Besieged, — nay, worse, —
No actual Homer, no authentic text,
No warrant for the fiction I, as fact,
Had treasured in my heart and soul so long —
Ay, mark you! and as fact held still, still hold,
Spite of new knowledge, in my heart of hearts
And soul of souls, fact's essence freed and fixed
From accidental fancy's guardian sheath.
Assuredly thenceforward — thank my stars! —
However it got there, deprive who could —
Wring from the shrine my precious tenantry,
Helen, Ulysses, Hector and his Spouse,
Achilles and his Friend? — though Wolf — ah, Wolf!
Why must he needs come doubting, spoil a dream?

But then, "No dream 's worth waking" — Browning says:
And here 's the reason why I tell thus much.
I, now mature man, you anticipate,
May blame my Father justifiably
For letting me dream out my nonage thus,
And only by such slow and sure degrees
Permitting me to sift the grain from chaff,
Get truth and falsehood known and named as such.
Why did he ever let me dream at all,
Not bid me taste the story in its strength?
Suppose my childhood was scarce qualified
To rightly understand mythology,
Silence at least was in his power to keep:
I might have — somehow — correspondingly —
Well, who knows by what method, gained my gains,
Been taught, by forthrights not meanderings,

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My aim should be to loathe, like Peleus' son,
A lie as Hell's Gate, love my wedded wife,
Like Hector, and so on with all the rest.
Could not I have excogitated this
Without believing such men really were?
That is — he might have put into my hand
The "Ethics"? In translation, if you please,
Exact, no pretty lying that improves,
To suit the modern taste: no more, no less —
The "Ethics": 't is a treatise I find hard
To read aright now that my hair is gray,
And I can manage the original.
At five years old — how ill had fared its leaves!
Now, growing double o'er the Stagirite,
At least I soil no page with bread and milk,
Nor crumple, dogs-ear and deface — boys' way.

REPHAN.*

How I lived, ere my human life began
In this world of yours, — like you, made man, —
When my home was the Star of my God Rephan?

Come then around me, close about,
World-weary earth-born ones! Darkest doubt
Or deepest despondency keeps you out?

Nowise! Before a word I speak,
Let my circle embrace your worn, your weak,
Brow-furrowed old age, youth's hollow cheek —

Diseased in the body, sick in soul,
Pinched poverty, satiate wealth, — your whole
Array of despairs! Have I read the roll?

All here? Attend, perpend! O Star
Of my God Rephan, what wonders are
In thy brilliance fugitive, faint and far!

Far from me, native to thy realm,
Who shared its perfections which o'erwhelm
Mind to conceive. Let drift the helm,

*Suggested by a very early recollection of a prose story by the noble woman and imaginative writer, Jane Taylor, of Norwich.

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Let drive the sail, dare unconfined
Embark for the vastitude, O Mind,
Of an absolute bliss! Leave earth behind!

Here, by extremes, at a mean you guess:
There, all 's at most — not more, not less:
Nowhere deficiency nor excess.

No want — whatever should be, is now:
No growth — that 's change, and change comes — how
To royalty born with crown on brow?

Nothing begins — so needs to end:
Where fell it short at first? Extend
Only the same, no change can mend!

I use your language: mine — no word
Of its wealth would help who spoke, who heard,
To a gleam of intelligence. None preferred,

None felt distaste when better and worse
Were uncontrastable: bless or curse
What — in that uniform universe?

Can your world's phrase, your sense of things
Forth-figure the Star of my God? No springs,
No winters throughout its space. Time brings

No hope, no fear: as to-day, shall be
To-morrow: advance or retreat need we
At our stand-still through eternity?

All happy: needs must we so have been,
Since who could be otherwise? All serene:
What dark was to banish, what light to screen?

Earth's rose is a bud that 's checked or grows
As beams may encourage or blasts oppose:
Our lives leapt forth, each a full-orbed rose —

Each rose sole rose in a sphere that spread
Above and below and around — rose-red:
No fellowship, each for itself instead.

One better than I — would prove I lacked
Somewhat: one worse were a jarring fact
Disturbing my faultlessly exact.

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How did it come to pass there lurked
Somehow a seed of change that worked
Obscure in my heart till perfection irked? —

Till out of its peace at length grew strife —
Hopes, fears, loves, hates, — obscurely rife, —
My life grown a-tremble to turn your life?

Was it Thou, above all lights that are,
Prime Potency, did Thy hand unbar
The prison-gate of Rephan my Star?

In me did such potency wake a pulse
Could trouble tranquillity that lulls
Not lashes inertion till throes convulse

Soul's quietude into discontent?
As when the completed rose bursts, rent
By ardors till forth from its orb are sent

New petals that mar — unmake the disk —
Spoil rondure: what in it ran brave risk,
Changed apathy's calm to strife, bright, brisk,

Pushed simple to compound, sprang and spread
Till, fresh-formed, faceted, floreted,
The flower that slept woke a star instead?

No mimic of Star Rephan! How long
I stagnated there where weak and strong,
The wise and the foolish, right and wrong,

Are merged alike in a neutral Best,
Can I tell? No more than at whose behest
The passion arose in my passive breast,

And I yearned for no sameness but difference
In thing and thing, that should shock my sense
With a want of worth in them all, and thence

Startle me up, by an Infinite
Discovered above and below me — height
And depth alike to attract my flight,

Repel my descent: by hate taught love.
Oh, gain were indeed to see above
Supremacy ever — to move, remove,

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Not reach — aspire yet never attain
To the object aimed at! Scarce in vain, —
As each stage I left nor touched again.

To suffer, did pangs bring the loved one bliss,
Wring knowledge from ignorance, — just for this —
To add one drop to a love-abyss!

Enough: for you doubt, you hope, O men,
You fear, you agonize, die: what then?
Is an end to your life's work out of ken?

Have you no assurance that, earth at end,
Wrong will prove right? Who made shall mend
In the higher sphere to which yearnings tend?

Why should I speak? You divine the test.
When the trouble grew in my pregnant breast
A voice said, "So wouldst thou strive, not rest?

"Burn and not smoulder, win by worth,
Not rest content with a wealth that 's dearth?
Thou art past Rephan, thy place be Earth!"

REVERIE.

I KNOW there shall dawn a day
— Is it here on homely earth?
Is it yonder, worlds away,
Where the strange and new have birth,
That Power comes full in play?

Is it here, with grass about,
Under befriending trees,
When shy buds venture out,
And the air by mild degrees
Puts winter's death past doubt?

Is it up amid whirl and roar
Of the elemental flame
Which star-flecks heaven's dark floor,
That, new yet still the same,
Full in play comes Power once more?

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Somewhere, below, above,
Shall a day dawn — this I know —
When Power, which vainly strove
My weakness to o'erthrow,
Shall triumph. I breathe, I move,

I truly am, at last!
For a veil is rent between
Me and the truth which passed
Fitful, half-guessed, half-seen,
Grasped at —not gained, held fast.

I for my race and me
Shall apprehend life's law:
In the legend of man shall see
Writ large what small I saw
In my life's tale: both agree.

As the record from youth to age
Of my own, the single soul —
So the world's wide book: one page
Deciphered explains the whole
Of our common heritage.

How but from near to far
Should knowledge proceed, increase?
Try the clod ere test the star!
Bring our inside strife to peace
Ere we wage, on the outside, war!

So, my annals thus begin:
With body, to life awoke
Soul, the immortal twin
Of body which bore soul's yoke
Since mortal and not akin.

By means of the flesh, grown fit,
Mind, in surview of things,
Now soared, anon alit
To treasure its gatherings
From the ranged expanse — to-wit,

Nature, — earth's, heaven's wide show
Which taught all hope, all fear:
Acquainted with joy and woe,
I could say, "Thus much is clear,
Doubt annulled thus much: I know.

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"All is effect of cause:
As it would, has willed and done
Power: and my mind's applause
Goes, passing laws each one,
To Omnipotence, lord of laws."

Head praises, but heart refrains
From loving's acknowledgment.
Whole losses outweigh half-gains:
Earth's good is with evil blent:
Good struggles but evil reigns.

Yet since Earth's good proved good —
Incontrovertibly
Worth loving — I understood
How evil — did mind descry
Power's object to end pursued —

Were haply as cloud across
Good's orb, no orb itself:
Mere mind — were it found at loss
Did it play the trickey elf
And from life's gold purge the dross?

Power is known infinite:
Good struggles to be — at best
Seems — scanned by the human sight,
Tried by the senses' test —
Good palpably: but with right

Therefore to mind's award
Of loving, as power claims praise?
Power — which finds naught too hard,
Fulfilling itself all ways
Unchecked, unchanged: while barred,

Baffled, what good began
Ends evil on every side.
To Power submissive man
Breathes, "E'en as Thou art, abide!"
While to good "Late-found, long-sought,

"Would Power to a plenitude
But liberate, but enlarge
Good's strait confine, — renewed
Were ever the heart's discharge
Of loving!" Else doubts intrude.

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For you dominate, stars all!
For a sense informs you — brute,
Bird, worm, fly, great and small,
Each with your attribute
Or low or majestical!

Thou earth that embosomest
Offspring of land and sea —
How thy hills first sank to rest,
How thy vales bred herb and tree
Which dizen thy mother-breast —

Do I ask? "Be ignorant
Ever!" the answer clangs:
Whereas if I plead world's want,
Soul's sorrows and body's pangs,
Play the human applicant, —

Is a remedy far to seek?
I question and find response:
I — all men, strong or weak,
Conceive and declare at once
For each want its cure. "Power, speak!

"Stop change, avert decay,
Fix life fast, banish death,
Eclipse from the star bid stay,
Abridge of no moment's breath
One creature! Hence, Night, hail, Day!"

What need to confess again
No problem this to solve
By impotence? Power, once plain
Proved Power, — let on Power devolve
Good's right to co-equal reign!

Past mind's conception — Power!
Do I seek how star, earth, beast,
Bird, worm, fly, gain their dower
For life's use, most and least?
Back from the search I cower.

Do I seek what heals all harm,
Nay, hinders the harm at first,
Saves earth? Speak, Power, the charm!
Keep the life there unamerced
By chance, change, death's alarm!

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As promptly as mind conceives,
Let Power in its turn declare
Some law which wrong retrieves,
Abolishes everywhere
What thwarts, what irks, what grieves!

Never to be! and yet
How easy it seems — to sense
Like man's — if somehow met
Power with its match — immense
Love, limitless, unbeset

By hindrance on every side!
Conjectured, nowise known,
Such may be: could man confide
Such would match — were Love but shown
Stript of the veils that hide —

Power's self now manifest!
So reads my record: thine,
O world, how runs it? Guessed
Were the purport of that prime line,
Prophetic of all the rest!

"In a beginning God
Made heaven and earth." Forth flashed
Knowledge: from star to clod
Man knew things: doubt abashed
Closed its long period.

Knowledge obtained Power praise.
Had Good been manifest,
Broke out in cloudless blaze,
Unchequered as unrepressed,
In all things Good at best —

Then praise — all praise, no blame —
Had hailed the perfection. No!
As Power's display, the same
Be Good's — praise forth shall flow
Unisonous in acclaim!

Even as the world its life,
So have I lived my own —
Power seen with Love at strife,
That sure, this dimly shown,
— Good rare and evil rife.

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Whereof the effect be — faith
That, some far day, were found
Ripeness in things now rathe,
Wrong righted, each chain unbound,
Renewal born out of scathe.

Why faith — but to lift the load,
To leaven the lump, where lies
Mind prostrate through knowledge owed
To the loveless Power it tries
To withstand, how vain! In flowed

Ever resistless fact:
No more than the passive clay
Disputes the potter's act,
Could the whelmed mind disobey
Knowledge the cataract.

But, perfect in every part,
Has the potter's moulded shape,
Leap of man's quickened heart,
Throe of his thought's escape,
Stings of his soul which dart

Through the barrier of flesh, till keen
She climbs from the calm and clear,
Through turbidity all between,
From the known to the unknown here,
Heaven's "Shall be," from Earth's "Has been"?

Then life is — to wake not sleep,
Rise and not rest, but press
From earth's level where blindly creep
Things perfected, more or less,
To the heaven's height, far and steep,

Where, amid what strifes and storms
May wait the adventurous quest,
Power is Love — transports, transforms
Who aspired from worst to best,
Sought the soul's world, spurned the worms'.

I have faith such end shall be:
From the first, Power was — I knew.
Life has made clear to me
That, strive but for closer view,
Love were as plain to see.

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When see? When there dawns a day,
If not on the homely earth,
Then yonder, worlds away,
Where the strange and new have birth,
And Power comes full in play.

EPILOGUE.

At the midnight in the silence of the sleep-time,
When you set your fancies free,
Will they pass to where — by death, fools think, imprisoned —
Low he lies who once so loved you, whom you loved so,
— Pity me?

Oh to love so, be so loved, yet so mistaken!
What had I on earth to do
With the slothful, with the mawkish, the unmanly?
Like the aimless, helpless, hopeless, did I drivel
— Being — who?

One who never turned his back but marched breast forward,
Never doubted clouds would break,
Never dreamed, though right were worsted, wrong would triumph,
Held we fall to rise, are baffled to fight better,
Sleep to wake.

No, at noonday in the bustle of man's work-time
Greet the unseen with a cheer!
Bid him forward, breast and back as either should be,
"Strive and thrive!" cry "Speed, — fight on, fare ever
There as here!"

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APPENDIX

POEMS UNCOLLECTED BY BROWNING

SONNET

EYES, calm beside thee, (Lady could'st thou know!)
May turn away thick with fast-gathering tears:
I glance not where all gaze: thrilling and low
Their passionate praises reach thee — my cheek wears
Alone no wonder when thou passest by;
Thy tremulous lids bent and suffused reply
To the irrepressible homage which doth glow
On every lip but mine: if in thine ears
Their accents linger — and thou dost recall
Me as I stood, still, guarded, very pale,
Beside each votarist whose lighted brow
Wore worship like an aureole, "O'er them all
My beauty," thou wilt murmur, "did prevail
Save that one only:" — Lady could'st thou know!

August 17, 1834. Z.

BEN KARSHOOK'S WISDOM

I

"Would a man 'scape the rod?"
Rabbi Ben Karshook saith,
"See that he turn to God
The day before his death."

"Ay, could a man inquire
When it shall come!" I say.
The Rabbi's eye shoots fire —
"Then let him turn today!"

II

Quoth a young Sadducee:
"Reader of many rolls,

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Is it so certain we
Have, as they tell us, souls?"

"Son, there is no reply!"
The Rabbi bit his beard:
"Certain, a soul have *I*—
We may have none," he sneered.

Thus Karshook, the Hiram's-Hammer,
The Right-hand Temple-column,
Taught babes in grace their grammar,
And struck the simple, solemn.

ROME, *April* 27, 1854.

HELEN'S TOWER

Ἑλένη ἐπὶ πύργῳ

Who hears of Helen's Tower, may dream perchance
How the Greek Beauty from the Scæan Gate
Gazed on old friends unanimous in hate,
Death-doom'd because of her fair countenance.

Hearts would leap otherwise, at thy advance,
Lady, to whom this Tower is consecrate!
Like hers, thy face once made all eyes elate,
Yet, unlike hers, was bless'd by every glance.

The Tower of Hate is outworn, far and strange:
A transitory shame of long ago,
It dies into the sand from which it sprang;
But thine, Love's rock-built Tower, shalt fear no change.
God's self laid stable earth's foundations so,
When all the morning-stars together sang.

April 26, 1870.

O LOVE! LOVE!

I

O Love! Love! thou that from the eyes diffusest
Yearning, and on the soul sweet grace inducest,—
Souls against whom thy hostile march is made,—
Never to me be manifest in ire,

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Nor, out of time and tune, my peace invade!
Since neither from the fire —
No, nor from the stars — is launched a bolt more mighty
Than that of Aphrodité
Hurled from the hands of Love, the boy with Zeus for sire.

II

Idly, how idly, by the Alpheian river
And in the Pythian shrines of Phœbus, quiver
Blood-offerings from the bull, which Hellas heaps:
While Love we worship not — the Lord of men!
Worship not him, the very key who keeps
Of Aphrodité, when
She closes up her dearest chamber-portals:
— Love, when he comes to mortals,
Wide-wasting, through those deeps of woes beyond the deep!

December 18, 1878.

THE BLIND MAN TO THE MAIDEN

(Translated from Wilhelmine von Hillern's *The Hour Will Come*)

The blind man to the maiden said,
"O thou of hearts the truest,
Thy countenance is hid from me;
Let not my question anger thee!
Speak, though in words the fewest.

"Tell me, what kind of eyes are thine?
Dark eyes, or light ones rather?"
"My eyes are a decided brown —
So much, at least, by looking down,
From the brook's glass I gather."

"And is it red — thy little mouth?
That too the blind must care for."
"Ah! I would tell it soon to thee,
Only — none yet has told it me.
I cannot answer, therefore.

"But dost thou ask what heart I have —
There hesitate I never.
In thine own breast 't is borne, and so
'Tis thine in weal, and thine in woe,
For life, for death — thine ever!"

1879.

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ALBUM LINES

(Explanatory to Epilogue of *Dramatic Idyls.*)

Thus I wrote in London, musing on my betters,
Poets dead and gone; and lo, the critics cried,
"Out on such a boast!" as if I dreamed that fetters
Binding Dante bind up — me! as if true pride
Were not also humble!
So I smiled and sighed
As I oped your book in Venice this bright morning,
Sweet new friend of mine! and felt the clay or sand,
Whatsoe'er my soil be, break — for praise or scorning —
Out in grateful fancies — weeds; but weeds expand
Almost into flowers, held by such a kindly hand.

VENICE, *October* 14, 1880.

IMPROMPTU

All singers, trust me, have this common vice:
To sing 'mid friends, you 'll have to ask them twice.
If you don't ask them, 't is another thing.
Until the judgment-day be sure they'll sing.

1883.

GOLDONI

Goldoni — good, gay, sunniest of souls, —
Glassing half Venice in that verse of thine, —
What though it just reflect the shade and shine
Of common life, nor render, as it rolls,
Grandeur and gloom? Sufficient for thy shoals
Was Carnival: Parini's depths enshrine
Secrets unsuited to that opaline
Surface of things which laughs along thy scrolls.
There throng the People: how they come and go,
Lisp the soft language, flaunt the bright garb, — see, —
On Piazza, Calle, under Portico
And over Bridge! Dear king of Comedy,
Be honored! Thou that didst love Venice so,
Venice, and we who love her, all love thee!

VENICE, *November* 27, 1883.

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RAWDON BROWN

"Tutti ga i so gusti, e mi go i mii."
(*Venetian saying.*)

Sighed Rawdon Brown: "Yes, I'm departing, Toni!
I needs must, just this once before I die,
Revisit England: *Anglus* Brown am I,
Although my heart's Venetian. Yes, old crony —
Venice and London — London's 'Death the bony'
Compared with Life — that's Venice! What a sky,
A sea, this morning! One last look! Good-bye,
Cà Pesaro! No, lion — I'm a coney
To weep! I'm dazzled; 'tis that sun I view
Rippling the . . . the . . . *Cospetto*, Toni! Down
With carpet-bag, and off with valise-straps!
Bella Venezia, non ti lascio più!"
Nor did Brown ever leave her: well, perhaps
Browning, next week, may find himself quite Brown!

November 28, 1883.

THE NAMES

Shakespeare! — to such name's sounding, what succeeds
Fitly as silence? Falter forth the spell, —
Act follows word, the speaker knows full well,
Nor tampers with its magic more than needs.
Two names there are: That which the Hebrew reads
With his soul only: if from lips it fell,
Echo, back thundered by earth, heaven and hell,
Would own "Thou did'st create us!" Naught impedes
We voice the other name, man's most of might,
Awesomely, lovingly: let awe and love
Mutely await their working, leave to sight
All of the issue as — below — above —
Shakespeare's creation rises: one remove,
Though dread — this finite from that infinite.

March 12, 1884.

THE FOUNDER OF THE FEAST

"Enter my palace," if a prince should say —.
"Feast with the Painters! See, in bounteous row,
They range from Titian up to Angelo!"

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Could we be silent at the rich survey?
A host so kindly, in as great a way
Invites to banquet, substitutes for show
Sound that 's diviner still, and bids us know
Bach like Beethoven; are we thankless, pray?

Thanks, then, to Arthur Chappell, — thanks to him
Whose every guest henceforth not idly vaunts
"Sense has received the utmost Nature grants,
My cup was filled with rapture to the brim,
When, night by night, — ah, memory, how it haunts! —
Music was poured by perfect ministrants,
By Halle, Schumann, Piatti, Joachim."

April 5, 1884.

WHY I AM A LIBERAL

"Why?" Because all I haply can do,
All that I am now, all I hope to be, —
Whence comes it save from fortune setting free
Body and soul the purpose to pursue,
God traced for both? If fetters, not a few,
Of prejudice, convention, fall from me,
These shall I bid men — each in his degree
Also God-guided — bear, and gayly, too?

But little do or can the best of us:
That little is achieved through Liberty.
Who, then, dares hold, emancipated thus,
His fellow shall continue bound? Not I,
Who live, love, labor freely, nor discuss
A brother's right to freedom. That is "Why."

EPITAPH ON LEVI LINCOLN THAXTER

Levi Lincoln Thaxter. Born in Watertown, Massachusetts, February 1, 1824. Died May 31, 1884.

Thou, whom these eyes saw never! Say friends true
Who say my soul, helped onward by my song,
Though all unwittingly, has helped thee too?
I gave of but the little that I knew:
How were the gift requited, while along
Life's path I pace, couldst thou make weakness strong!
Help me with knowledge — for Life 's Old — Death 's New!

R. B. to L. L. T., *April*, 1885.

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JUBILEE MEMORIAL LINES

(For a window in St. Margaret's, Westminster.)

Fifty years' flight! wherein should he rejoice
Who hailed their birth, who as they die decays?
This — England echoes his attesting voice;
Wondrous and well — thanks, Ancient Thou of days.

1887.

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NOTES

The number of the page is given, followed immediately by the number of the line on the page. The word or passage which is interpreted is given in italics. All the passages on a page are put into one paragraph, but in case there is more than one the page number is not repeated and the number of the line is put in parenthesis. Where stanzas are numbered this numbering is sometimes used instead of that of the page.

4. THE AGAMEMNON OF ÆSCHYLUS. (3) *Atreidai*, patronymic given by Homer to Agamemnon and Menelaos as sons of Atreus. (9) *Troia*, Troy, to which Paris carried Helen. (11) *man's-way-planning*, acts planned by a woman, usually thought only capable of performance by a man. (28) *Ilion*, citadel of Troy.

5: 2, *thrice-six*, the highest throw with dice in gambling, three dice being used. (5) *on tongue a big ox has trodden*, a proverbial expression for silence. (9) *Priamos' great match*, Priam's antagonists, Agamemnon and his brother. (14) *clamoring 'Ares,'* shouting for war, Ares being god of war. (27) *Erinus*, to avenge wrong. (35) *Danaoi*, people of Argos, also applied to all Greeks; *Troes*, Trojans.

6: 11, *Tundareus*, King of Lacedæmon, who married Leda, mother of Helen and Klutaimnestra. (38) *Teukris land*, that of Trojans, from their king Teucer. (40) *Achaian's two-throned empery*, rule of the brothers Agamemnon and Menelaos.

7: 3, *Linos*, a legendary poet, torn in pieces by dogs; he became typical of grief and lamentation because of early death: the word means same as woe. (19) *virgin Artemis*, a goddess who protects mothers, and here resents feast of eagles on mother-hare. (34) *Ieïos Paian*, Apollo, brother of Artemis, and able to avert her vengeance.

8: 1, *that old children's fate;* Thuestes, ancestor of house of Atreus, feasted on flesh of his own children given him as a banquet by his brother, and this woe has led to new ones. (2) *Kalchas*, a soothsayer who decreed sacrifice of Iphigenia. (17) *the great of yore*, Uranos and Cronos, gods before Zeus. (41) *Kalchis*, the chief city of Eubœa, founded by Athenians. (42) *Aulis*, a town on mainland opposite Kalchis; *winds from Strumon*, adverse winds from Strumonic Gulf in Thrace blowing across Ægean.

10: 29, *Apian land*, that of Argives, from Apis, a physician who freed it from monsters who devoured men, as described in *The Suppliants* of Æschylus, line 259.

11: 13, *Hephaistos*, the god of fire; *Idé*, Mount Ida, on island of Lemnos. (17) *Athoan summit*, that of Mount Athos, in Macedonia.

12: 1, *Makistos*, a mountain in Eubœa. (4) *Euripos*, the strait separating Eubœa from Bœotia. (5) *Messapios*, on coast of Bœotia. (9) *Plain Asopos*, that of river of that name in Thessaly. (10) *Mount Kithairon*, in southern part of Bœotia. (14) *Lake Gorgopis*,

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a bay of Corinthian Gulf. (15) *Mount Aigiplanktos*, in Megaris. (20) *Strait Saronic*, in Saronic Gulf. (22) *Mount Arachnaios*, in Argos and visible from palace. (25) *rules prescribed*, those of torch-races, described by Pausanias, i. 30, 2.

13:30, *Até*, goddess of revenge.

16:2, *Erinues*, Furies.

17:9, *Puthian*, Apollo. (11) *Skamandros*, river of Troas. (36) *Priamidai*, patronymic of descendants of Priam.

20:9, *bronze-dippings*, tempering of bronze, not understood by the Queen.

21:36, *water-Haides*, the engulfing sea.

22:18, *Zephuros*, west wind. (23) *Simois*, river in Troas which rises in Mount Ida and falls into the Xanthus.

25:15, *the Argeian monster*, wooden horse concealing Argives, by means of which Troy was entered, *Odyssey*, iv. 353.

26:16, *triple-bodied Geruon*, Geryon, king of Balearic Islands, who had three bodies and three heads, slain by Herakles. (27) *Strophios the Phokian*, with whom Orestes found refuge and was taught by Pylades.

30:22, *Kassandra*, daughter of Priam, slain by Klutaimnestra. (27) *Alkmene's child*, Herakles.

31:9, *Kars*, mutes. (20) *Ototoi*, alas! (22) *Loxias*, a surname of Apollo.

33:11, *papai, papai*, O strange! wonderful!

34:24, *Itus=Itys*, Philomela turned into nightingale, and telling sorrowful story of her sister's son Itus, *Odyssey*, xix. 518.

35:2, *Orthian style*, in shrill tones of Spartan boys whipped at altar of Artemis. (9) *Kokutos*, river of wailing; *Acheron*, river of woe; both in under-world.

37:24, *some amphisbaina* means double-goer, serpent with head at both ends; *Skulla*, sea-monster described in *Odyssey*, xii. 85.

40:9, *Surian*, Syrian.

44:34, *Chruseids*, patronymic of descendants of Astynome, daughter of Chryses, in *Iliad*, i. 133. (39) *swan-fashion . . . dying*, because having gift of foresight and prophecy, rejoice when dying, described in Plato's *Phædo*, 85.

45:32, *Tantalidai*, descendants of Tantalus, father of Pelops, who was father of Thuestes.

48:24, *Daimon of Pleisthenidai*, genius of family of Pleisthenes, father of Tantalus, ancestor of Agamemnon.

49:8, *Thuestes*, son of Pelops, brother of Atreus. (20) *Pelopidai*, descendants of Pelops, son of Tantalus.

54. La Saisiaz. (24) *Collonge*, small town near Geneva, Switzerland.

55:12, *Salève*, mountain near Geneva that gives view of Jura and Mont Blanc.

56:28, *the Marshal's next move . . . Gambetta's counter-play*, the contest in France, at the time of the writing of the poem, between Marshal MacMahon, President of the French Republic, and Leon Gambetta, afterward president, that led to the imprisonment of Gambetta, his election to the Assembly, and his compelling Macmahon to resign in 1879.

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67: 17, *mazy Arve*, river Arve, that flows into Lake Geneva.

31: 23, *phrase the solemn Tuscan fashioned*, Dante's words about his meeting hereafter with Beatrice, in Convito, ii. 9, quoted at end of Browning's letter, given in Introduction to this volume.

68: 23, *such grudge in God as scared the ancient Greek* refers to feeling of the jealousy of the gods toward men, as expressed by Solon, in *Herodotus*, i. 32: "The divinity is always jealous and delights in confusion," and also by Æschylus, in *Agamemnon*, 622: "by the will of the gods, some minister of Atè hath been fostered in this house."

73: 5, *Athanasius contra mundum*, Athanasius against the world, words used by Richard Hooker in describing the theological attitude of this bishop of Alexandria in his defence of Nicene doctrine of the Trinity against that of the Arians. (12) *Bossex*, birthplace of Jean Jacques Rousseau, who preached the gospel of nature, and held that "All that 's good is gone and past." (14) *Diodati*, villa on Lake Geneva, where Byron lived. Byron's hatred of men was equalled only by his love of nature, a mental attitude described by Browning in "Dying day with dolphin-hues," and "Man is meanest."

74: 10, *pine-tree of Makistos*, referred to in Browning's *Agamemnon*, lines 302–310, Makistos, being highest point in Eubœa, used as place for beacon-light in signalling news from Troy of its downfall, and from there conveyed to mainland and to Athens; hence beacon-light of the great men referred to, who signal to men across the centuries. (13) *Lausanne*, town where Gibbon studied as a young man, and to which he returned to write his *Decline and Fall*. (14) *the aspic, — sparkles, . . . and now condensed, the python;* here the asp and python are used to symbolize the wit of Voltaire. (17) *Ferney*, a village near Geneva, near which was the house occupied by Voltaire for many years. (19) *terebinth-tree*, turpentine tree, which is used to symbolize Rousseau's fervid eloquence and vivid imagination. (21) *Diodati*, Byron, so called from the place of his residence in Switzerland.

77. The Two Poets of Croisic. i. 4, *crusted . . . with copper*, driftwood that gives out colored flames from deposits of metal.

iv. 6, *octogenarian Keats;* this poet would have been fourscore had he lived, but even his early death did not prevent his being of more worth than the pampered son of fortune who lived long and did the world no good.

vi. 7, *Job and Hebrew name*, Job v. 7; xviii. 5; Isaiah i. 31; l. 11.

xi. 1, *Croisic*, described in Mrs. Katherine S. Macquoid's *Through Brittany:* "At first sight it looks like a dull little fishing-village. The port is completely enclosed by small islands, and a long artifical causeway, called the Chaussée de Pembron, built to preserve the salt marshes from the inroads of the sea, for there seems to be little doubt that the whole of the peninsula, including Le Croisic, Batz, and Le Pouliguen, was at one time an island, and that by degrees the channel between it and the mainland has transformed itself into salt-marshes. There are plenty of fishing-boats and stalwart-looking fishermen; but, following the straggling line of granite houses which surrounds the bay, we remarked that many of them were very curious, and almost all were very ancient in appearance. Farther on is some higher ground, grassed sand-hills with furze and broom at

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intervals, and shaded by trees, and from this, at some distance, we saw the pier stretching into the sea. Near the pier are the établissement des bains and the hôtel. . . . There is little to see in Le Croisic itself, though it is a good plan to stay a few days there, so as to see something of the very original inhabitants of this peninsula. The church Nôtre Dame de la Pitié is not remarkable. Another chapel, St. Goustan, is now closed, but the women of Croisic still pray there for those at sea. From the Mont Esprit, at the end of the promenade called Le Mail, there is an excellent view of the town and harbor of Le Croisic; the town surrounded by the sandy waste of salt-pans, and rising from these the church towers of Batz and of La Guérande. Beyond the harbor is the Atlantic; there is a fine sea view from Mont Lenigo. The population seems to be partly composed of fishermen and partly of salt-workers; but there is here, as well as in the Bourg de Batz, a certain separateness and exclusiveness of both costume and ideas. The people of Le Croisic call themselves Croisicais, in contradistinction to Bretons, but they do not seem so fine a race as the people of the Bourg de Batz. Alain Bouchart, the historian, was born at Le Croisic; and in the fifteenth century this town seems to have been rich and prosperous, the centre of the salt-trade."

xi. 3, *Guérande*, village near Le Croisic. (4) *Batz*, village near Le Croisic.

xii. 2, *Druids* were powerful in this region in pagan times, it being the chief seat of their worship; and they gathered here from all places of their worship for conference and for the most imposing rites. The survivals of their practices are mentioned by the poet. He also speaks of the prominence given to women among the Druids.

xiv. 3, *Menhir*, monument, consisting of single tall stone, used to mark a battle or a grave.

xx. 8, *Hervé Riel*, born in Le Croisic, whose deed is described in note on poem devoted to him in *Pacchiarotto*.

xxi. 5, *gules*, in heraldry the color red; *vert*, green.

xxv. 1, *René Gentilhomme*, born in Le Croisic, in 1610, of whom little is known, so little that his name does not appear in any of the usual sources of information on biographical and literary subjects. He was a maker of verses, as was his father before him. Having become the page of the prince of Condé, he spent his leisure in writing complimentary verses. As Louis XIII. and his brother were both childless, the prince of Condé, usually called the Duke, was the heir to the throne. One day a ducal crown in the room where René sat was shattered by lightning. He took this as a sign from heaven that the prince of Condé was not to become king; and he made a bold poem, in which he declared that a dauphin would be born the next year. When this came to the king's ears, he made René his royal poet. As a dauphin was born the next year, René was regarded as a seer, and got all the honors due that kind of a personage. After this the poet wrote no more poetry, and a thin volume of rhymes was all that could be given to the public as the product of his muse. (8) *Prince of Condé*, the Huguenot statesman of time of Louis XIII., though he gradually changed to the Catholic side, but did not realize his high ambitions.

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xxvi. 4, *Anne of Austria*, daughter of Philip III. of Spain, wife of Louis XIII., but lived separately from him for twenty-three years.

xxxvii. 1, *neat crowquill calligraph*, fine penmanship blurred by slovenly writing.

xxxviii. 3, *divinior mens*, diviner thought. (6) *Rhadamanthine*, from Radamanthus, judge of the dead in Hades.

xl. 8, *Dauphin*, heir-apparent to French throne.

xlii. 7, *cony-kind*, simpleton or dupe.

xlv. 8, *Simeon*, Genesis xxix. 33.

xlviii. 8, *biforked hill*, that of Parnassus, with two peaks, one sacred to Muses, the other to Apollo. (8) *Getic*, from Getæ, ancient inhabitants of Thrace, who became Goths; hence contrast of Greek and Gothic culture.

lxi. 4, *reed is crushed*, by beast, as it seeks warmer climate owing to ice-movements in early times, migrating by a blind instinct to a fitter place of habitation. (9) *fortalice*, outwork of fort.

lxix. 2, *Paul Desforges Maillard*, born in Le Croisic, in 1699. He was a man of some importance in his neighborhood, for he was a member of the academies of Rochelle, Caen, and Nancy. Almost nothing is now known of him, except an incident which occurred in connection with his competition for a prize on the art of navigation, offered by the French Academy. He did not obtain the prize, and his poem was returned to him. At this he was indignant, and his indignation led him to seek to prove to the public that he had not been justly dealt with by the judges. To this end he sent his poems to *Le Mercure*, but the editor, La Roque, respectfully declined to print them. Desforges insisted upon their publication, taking the editor's praise, and his declaration that he did not wish to offend the Academy, as an expression of cowardice. When he wrote La Roque an angry letter, taking him to task for his want of bravery and justice, the editor threw his poems into the fire, and wrote him that they were too poor to print. Desforges, in despair at this cruel cutting short of the fame he had hoped for, had recourse to a singular artifice. He was living then at Brederac, close to a vineyard called Malcrais. Taking a sister into his confidence, he had her copy out some of his poorest poems, which he sent to La Roque as the poems of Mlle. Malcrais de la Vigne. With these the editor was greatly delighted, coming to him as they did in a feminine handwriting, and perhaps with a little feminine flattery added. La Roque not only printed the poems, but wrote a most glowing letter to the supposed poetess, and even conceived a violent passion for the muse of La Croisic. He took the liberty of writing her: "I love you, my dear friend of Brittany. Pardon me this confession, but the words have slipped from my pen." La Roque was not the only one duped by this poetical deception. One could not speak enough in Paris of the verses of the divine Malcrais. There was not a poet who was not eager to render her honor through the medium of *Le Mercure*. Voltaire and Destouches, among the leading authors, made themselves the most conspicuous; and they were for the moment jealous of each other because of the answers, more or less tender, which they received from the coquette. Voltaire wrote of her this line: "Thou

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whose brilliant voice hast resounded upon our banks." This poem was printed in the works of Voltaire, and, of all the many verses written which the false Malcrais inspired her lovers, these are the only ones which remain. Those of Destouches had no value whatever, and have passed into oblivion.

When Desforges at last grew tired of his little comedy, and revealed his true sex, most of his admirers were at first not a little ashamed because of the public part he had made them play as his admirers. As soon as they had recovered from the first surprise and mortification, they saw that the mystery he had created was more awkward for him than for them. They sought to depreciate his verses and to render him ridiculous; and this it was easy to accomplish, for he had too little real merit to resist the reaction which his own methods had created.

Some time after this occurrence Desforges, who was not rich, begged of Voltaire to aid him in finding friends and a position in Paris. The author of *Zaire*, who was too cunning or too generous to harbor the least resentment, exerted himself with a good grace to help the once famous writer of *Le Mercure*. "I am reminded always," wrote Voltaire, "of the coquetries of Mdlle. Malcrais, in spite of your beard and of mine; and if I cannot make love to you, I will try and render you a service. I expect to see M——, the contrôleur-général, this summer. I shall look for a good opportunity to serve you; and I shall be very happy if I can obtain something from the Plutus of Versailles in favor of the Apollo of Brittany." It would appear, however, that the praises of Voltaire were greater than his practical helpfulness.

Very correct in his morals and upright in his character, Desforges has not ranked high as a poet. He was destitute of taste, and his style was flat and verbose. A few of his poetical tales remind one in a distant way of the epigrams of Rousseau. The *Poésies de Mlle. Malcrais de la Vigne* were published in 1735, and a volume of *Idyls* by Desforges was published in 1751. His *Works in Verse and Prose* were issued in two volumes at Amsterdam in 1759. Paul Desforges Maillard died December 10, 1772. The incident which forms the chief event in the life of Desforges became the subject of a comedy by Piron, which he called *Mitromanie*. See *Biographie Universelle* for the leading facts in the life of Desforges.

lxxiii. 1, *Academy;* the celebrated French Academy, founded by Cardinal Richelieu in 1635.

lxxiv. 4, *It's Virgil*, who, in *Æneid*, tells how the fleet of Æneas was likely to be wrecked, but Neptune came to his rescue, with aid of Triton and sea nymph. (5) *De Maille, Vendôme, Vermandois*, dukes or counts, who cause blowing of winds.

lxxix. 2, *brain-vibrios*, bacterium with vibratory movement.

lxxxiv. 5, *crambo*, rhyme made at suggestion of a word in game of rhyming.

xci. 7, *Roland's crest*, the unconquerable hero of romance; Carlovingian cycle.

xcvi. 1, *Deïdamia*, mother of Pyrrhus, by Achilles; *Achilles*, hero of Trojan war in *Iliad*. (7) *lady's smock*, a flower.

xcix. 2, *Brederac*, small town in Normandy.

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ci. 7, *ad hoc*, to this.

ciii. 8, *Deshoulierès*, Antoinette du Ligier, 1634–1694, a writer of note in her time, publishing many poems, plays, and operas.

cix. 6, *Dacier*, Anne Lefevre, a learned French woman, 1654–1720; first translator of *Iliad* and *Odyssey* into French prose, and enjoyed high reputation for scholarship.

cxii. 3, *Trévoux*, town fourteen miles from Lyons.

cxiv. 8, *Donne*, English divine and poet, 1573–1631.

cxxi. 6, *Phœbe*, general name for heroine in pastoral poetry; *Phœbus*, Apollo, by whom Python of Mount Parnassus was killed.

cxxvi. 8, *Idalian*, from town of Idalia, sacred to Venus.

cxxxiii. 6, *haut-de-chausses*, hose.

cxxxvii. 3, *carte-and-tierce*, fencing term.

cxli. 4, *Macchiavelli*, statesman of Florence, 1469–1527, whose *Prince* is regarded as the consummation of intrigue in politics.

cl. 5, *belled the cat* refers to meeting of lords in Scotland to get rid of Cochrane, who had risen from a mason to Earl of Mar, when Earl Gray called to mind the fable of mice who wished to prevent attacks of the cat by putting a bell on her neck. "Who will bell the cat?" it was asked. "That will I," at once replied Archibald Douglass, Earl of Angus, who was always after known as Archibald Bell-the-cat.

cliii. 7, *chowse*, cheat or swindle.

cliv. 8, *Beddoes*, physician and poet, 1760–1808.

Epilogue, i. 4, *was it prose or was it rhyme?* The tale told here was taken from the Greek Anthology, vi. 54 and ix. 584. It first appeared in Timæus, and was retold by Strabo, Emperor Julian, and Clemens Alexandrinus. It will be found in J. W. Mackail's *Select Epigrams from Greek Anthology*, ii. 14, p. 127. It is given there in Greek, also in a prose translation, as follows: "Eunomus the Locrian hangs up this brazen grasshopper to the Lycæan god, a memorial of the contest from the crown. The strife was of the lyre, and Parthis stood up against me; but when the Locrian shell sounded under the plectrum, a lyre-string rang and snapped jarringly; but ere ever the tune halted in its fair harmonies, a delicate-trilling grasshopper seated itself on the lyre and took up the note of the last string, and turned the rustic sound that till then was vocal in the groves to the strain of our touch upon the lyre; and therefore, blessed son of Leto, he does honor to thy grasshopper, seating the singer in brass upon his harp."

xi. 5, *his Lotte's power too spent*, reference to Goethe's relations with young women he tired of and sought others, Lotte being the heroine in *Werther*.

117. MARTIN RELPH. An indistinct remembrance, of something heard by the poet when a boy, gave origin to this story in verse. The speaker is a grandson of a man who saw Martin Relph as an old man, and he tells the story as it was repeated to him by his grandfather.

118: 13, *quarrel . . . between King George and his foes*, probably George II. and rebellion of 1740–1745, when Charles Edward Stuart, called the "Young Pretender," made effort to secure the throne.

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123:15, *sounds French*, effort of Charles Edward to secure aid of the French in his attempt to obtain the English throne.

124. PHEIDIPPIDES. This poem is based on an incident related in Herodotus, *History*, vi. 105, 106; Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, i. 28, viii. 54; Cornelius Nepos, *Miltiades*, 4. In Pausanias and Cornelius Nepos the name of the hero is Philippides; and in Herodotus both forms are given in different manuscripts. In the year 490 B.C., when the Persians were invading Greece, they landed on the coast of Attica, and camped on the shore near the plain of Marathon. Word of this having been received in Athens, a consultation was held by the generals, who sent a swift runner to Sparta to beg for aid. His adventures are described by Herodotus in his *History*, as translated by Rawlinson:—

"And first, before they left the city, the generals sent off to Sparta a herald, one Pheidippides, who was by birth an Athenian, and by birth and practice a trained runner. This man, according to the account which he gave to the Athenians on his return, when he was near Mount Parthenium, above Tegea, fell in with the god Pan, who called him by his name, and bade him ask the Athenians 'wherefore they neglected him so entirely, when he was kindly disposed towards them, and had often helped them in times past, and would do so again in time to come?' The Athenians, entirely believing in the truth of this report, as soon as their affairs were once more in good order, set up a temple to Pan under the Acropolis, and, in return for the message which I have recorded, established in his honor yearly sacrifices and a torch-race.

"On the occasion of which we speak, when Pheidippides was sent by the Athenian generals, and, according to his own account, saw Pan on his journey, he reached Sparta on the very next day after quitting the city of Athens. Upon his arrival he went before the rulers, and said to them:—

"'Men of Lacedaemon, the Athenians beseech you to hasten to their aid, and not allow that state, which is the most ancient in all Greece, to be enslaved by the barbarians. Eretria, look you, is already carried away captive, and Greece weakened by the loss of no mean city.'

"Thus did Pheidippides deliver the message committed to him. And the Spartans wished to help the Athenians, but were unable to give them any present succor, as they did not like to break their established law. It was the ninth day of the first decade, and they could not march out of Sparta on the ninth, when the moon had not reached the full. So they waited for the full of the moon."

χαίρετε, νικῶμεν, Rejoice; we conquer!

124:4, *Her of the ægis and spear*, Athene, whose implements were a shield and spear. (5) *ye of the bow and the buskin*, Artemis, who was represented with bow and buskined legs of hunter. (8) *Pan*, god of woods, fields, and flocks, said to have won battle of Marathon by producing a panic amongst Persians. (9) *tettix*, grasshopper, golden images of which insect were worn by Athenians to represent they were descendants of original inhabitants, as they were regarded as having sprung from the ground.

125:1, *Sparta*, about 140 miles from Athens, but trained runners

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accomplished the feat. (7) *Persia bids Athens proffer slaves'-tribute*, the demand of Darius, in 493 B. C., for earth and water as tokens of submission, his heralds going into every part of Greece. (8) *Eretria*, one of chief cities of Eubœa. (21) *Phoibos*, Apollo. (22) *Olumpos*, mountain in northern Greece which myth made home of gods.

126: 7, *filleted victim* refers to decoration of sacrificial victims with ribbons and wreaths; *fulsome libation*, very large and rich. (12) *Parnes*, mountains in north of Attica, therefore not on route of Pheidippides.

127: 11, *we stand no more on the razor's edge*, a proverbial expression for extreme peril. (13) *Miltiades*, general in command at Marathon, 490 B. C.

128: 1, *Marathon day*, that on which the battle was fought, in September, long remembered by the Greeks, and undoubtedly saved Europe from Persian dominion. (2) *Akropolis*, citadel of Athens. (5) *Fennel-field*, in Greek, *Marathon;* in giving the fennel, Pan meant to indicate the place where the victory would be won. (16) *Pheidippides dies;* neither Herodotus nor Plutarch gives any account of the runner after the battle, as related by Browning; this part of the poem is probably original, or suggested by the poet's general knowledge of Greek legend and custom.

128. HALBERT AND HOB. The basis of this story is an anecdote related by Aristotle in his *Ethics*, Book VII. chap. vi. section 5, where he is discoursing of anger and its hereditary manifestations. "Anger and asperity," he says, "are more natural than excessive and unnecessary desires. It is like the case of the man who defended himself for beating his father, and he again beat his; and he also (pointing to his child) will beat me, when he becomes a man; for it runs in our family. And he that was dragged by his son, bid him stop at the door, for that he himself had dragged his father so far." "The style of this idyl," says Mr. R. H. Hutton, "seems expressly made to reflect the passing ferocity of the Yorkshire boors." The quotation in next to last line is from *Lear*, iii. 6, 81.

131. IVÀN IVÀNOVITCH. This story is frequently told in Russia, and is given in detail in *The Englishwoman in Russia*, by a lady, published in London in 1855. It is probably of folk-lore origin, though it may have had a basis in fact. (14) *in Peter's time*, that of Peter Alexeievitch I., 1672–1725, called the Great. (19) *verst*, two thirds of a mile. (28) *highway broad and straight* refers to the legend that when the first railroad was proposed, to run from St. Petersburg to Moscow, the Emperor Nicholas ordered that it should run absolutely straight, himself marking it with a ruler on the map. (35) *Iván Ivànovitch*, equivalent to Jack Jackson, being used to designate national traits, as in case of Uncle Sam and John Bull.

132: 17. *Droug* = druk, friend. (19) *motherkin*, Russian *màtushka*, endearing form of *mat*, mother, familiar form of address; always applied to any old peasant woman.

134: 19, *twin pigeons;* the most familiar term of endearment in Russia is *golùbchik*, which is the diminutive of the word for pigeon.

138: 23, *Pope;* every priest is called papa, or pope (without capital). (23) *Commune*, village government, communal in form, with the oldest man at head. (24) *Stàrosta*, bailiff of a village or over-

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seer of an estate, literally means old man, from *stàrost*, old age. (26) *Pomeschìk* = pomyèschik, landed proprietor.

141: 21, *the Sacred Pictures*, ikons or sacred paintings and mosaics in all Russian churches, one of Christ on right of holy doors, one at left of the Theotocos. (29) *Kremlin*, fortress in Moscow, built in 1156, and made by Peter the Great the palace and place of coronation of the Czars. (38) *Kolokol*, large bell of the Kremlin.

142. TRAY. This poem describes an actual incident witnessed in Paris by a friend of Browning's, and with accuracy of detail. The poem was written as a protest against vivisection, which the poet called "an infamous practice." He was early associated with Miss Frances Power Cobbe in her efforts to prevent vivisection; and he was a vice-president of the "Victoria Street Society for the Protection of Animals." Dr. Berdoe says: "He always expressed the utmost abhorrence of the practices which it opposes." To Miss Cobbe he wrote in 1874: "You have heard, 'I take an equal interest with yourself in the effort to suppress vivisection.' I dare not so honor my mere wishes and prayers as to put them for a moment beside your noble acts; but this I know, I would rather submit to the worst of deaths, so far as pain goes, than have a single dog or cat tortured on the pretence of sparing me a twinge or two." He goes even so far as to say that the person not willing to sign the petition against vivisection certainly could not be numbered among his friends. To Miss Stackpoole he wrote in April, 1883: "I despise and abhor the pleas on behalf of that infamous practice, vivisection." Dr. Berdoe says of this poem: "The poet ridicules the idea that the seat of the soul can be discovered by a more intimate knowledge of the brain, and bitterly satirizes the heartlessness and base ingratitude of our physiologists who use the dog, notwithstanding his intimate relationship to and friendship for man, as the material for the cruel experiments in the physiological laboratory. Not only did Mr. Browning think this to be useless and wicked, but he denounced it as cowardly, even if it could be proved to be useful."

143. NED BRATTS. In writing to Dr. Furnivall of this poem, Browning said: "The story of 'Old Tod,' as told in Bunyan's *Life and Death of Mr. Badman*, was distinctly in my mind when I wrote *Ned Bratts*, at the Splügen, without reference to what I had read when quite a boy." This was in reply to a statement that he took the story from his memory of it as read when a boy. As told by Bunyan the story is as follows: "At a summer assizes holden at Hertford, while the judge was sitting upon the bench, comes this old Tod into the Court, clothed in a green suit, with his leathern girdle in his hand, his bosom open, and all on a dung sweat, as if he had run for his life; and being come in, he spake aloud, as follows: 'My lord,' said he, 'here is the veriest rogue that breathes upon the face of the earth. I have been a thief from a child: when I was but a little one, I gave myself to rob orchards and to other such wicked things, and I have continued a thief ever since. My lord, there has not been a robbery committed these many years, within so many miles of this place, but I have either been at it, or privy to it.' The judge thought the fellow was mad, but after some conference with some of the justices, they agreed to indict him; and so they did of several felonious actions;

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to all of which he heartily confessed guilty, and so was hanged, with his wife at the same time." (1) *Bedford*, where John Bunyan was born, where he was imprisoned for many years, and made the scene of the events of this poem, instead of Hertford, as Bunyan states in telling the story, probably in order to bring the story into closer relations with Bunyan, whose book brought about the conversion of Ned Bratts, who sought hanging in order that the punishment might insure him future salvation. (15) *Chief Justice Jukes*, imaginary person; *Brother Small*, imaginary.

145: 12, *Public*, ale-house. (19) *quean*, woman, from Anglo-Saxon *cwén*, same word as queen, but the present spelling gives a term of reproach. (20) *noggin*, cup, here used to signify contents thereof. (23) *midden*, dung-hill. (38) *houghed the mare*, cutting sinews of hind leg between fetlock and knee.

146: 3, *the Book*, Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, published in 1678, the reading of which had converted Ned Bratts. (12) *wrote it in the jail* refers to writing of *Pilgrim's Progress* in jail on Bedford Bridge, probably in 1675–1676. (15) *Gammer*, old wife; *crab on Yule-tide bowl*, apple roasted in Christmas ale bowl. (20) *Gaffer*, old fellow. (28) *those laces;* Bunyan made laces in jail to support his family. (36) *his girl*, Bunyan's eldest daughter, Mary, was blind, and he was especially fond of her.

147: 17, *Dives*, the passage in Luke xvi. 20 is cited by Mr. Interpreter to Christian in *Pilgrim's Progress*. (18) *Charles*, the second of that name, restored in 1660. (17) *drerіment* = drearіment, dreadfulness, terror. (31) *Why cumbers it the ground?* Luke xiii. 7. (39) *Tophet*, Isaiah xxx. 33, quoted by Christian in *Pilgrim's Progress*. (41) *outstreats*, Old English for out-streams. Reference is to Numbers xx. 10.

148: 1, *Be your sins scarlet*, Isaiah i. 18. (21) *a just-lugged bear*, a newly-caught bear led by rope. (23) *Christmas was meant for me*, reference is to Christian in *Pilgrim's Progress*, who carries burden on his back. (24) *Joseph's sack;* reference is to Benjamin's sack in Genesis xliv. 12, Bratts' Biblical knowledge not yet being accurate. (31) *slack straps and into pit*, reference to Christian's song in *Pilgrim's Progress* when his burden slips from his back. (34) *Destruction*, reference to City of Destruction in *Pilgrim's Progress*.

149: 12, *Master Faithful*, whose rapid progress to the Heavenly City, in Bunyan's book, Bratts hopes to rival if he is hung for his sins.

150: 9, *Sackerson*, name for bear given by Shakespeare. (12) *Iron Cage*, reference to Backslider in *Pilgrim's Progress*, who once had faith, but when he fell away was shut up in iron cage. (31) *Reynard's game*, that of being sly; *feggs*, faith.

151: 1, *Amicus Curiæ*, friend of the Court. (13) *twelve years' pious reign*, reference to twelve years' imprisonment of Bunyan in Bedford jail. (14) *Astræa Rudex*, the reign of justice restored. (26) *Bunyan's Statue*, that of Bunyan in bronze, by Boehm.

153. ECHETLOS. This poem is based on a legend given by Pausanias, in his *Description of Greece*, i. 32, chapter on Attica, in which he describes the place where the battle of Marathon was fought, as follows: —

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"The township of Marathon is about equidistant from Athens and Carystus in Eubœa. It was this part of Attica that the Persians landed at, and were defeated, and lost some of their ships as they were putting out to sea in retreat. And in the plain is the tomb of the Athenians, and on it are pillars with the names of the dead according to their tribes. And another for the Platæans of Bœotia and their slaves; for this was the first engagement in which slaves fought. And there is apart a monument to Miltiades, the son of Cimon, whose death occurred afterwards, when he failed to capture Paros, and was on that account put on his trial by the Athenians. Here every night one may hear horses neighing and men fighting: those who come on purpose to see the sight suffer for their curiosity, but if they are there as spectators accidentally, the wrath of the gods harms them not. And the people of Marathon highly honor those that fell in the battle, calling them heroes, as also they pay honors to Marathon (from whom the township gets its name) and Hercules, whom they say they first of all the Greeks worshipped as a god. And it chanced, as they say, in the battle, that a man of rustic appearance and dress appeared, who slew many of the Persians with a ploughshare, and vanished after the fight; and when the Athenians made inquiry of the oracle, the god gave no other answer, but bade them honor the god Echetlæus. And a trophy of white stone was erected there."

Echetlos, "wielder of the ploughshare." A picture of this hero was in the Pœcile at Athens. Browning contrasts him with Miltiades, who made war on Paros for his own personal gain; and Themistokles, who went over to the Persians.

154: 6, *Kallimachos Polemarch;* Kallimachos was polemarch, or archon, one of nine persons having charge of military affairs in Athens at time of Marathon, and fell in that battle. (9) *Sakian*, Scythian tribe of Sakæ, on border of Baktria, which paid tribute to Persia.

154. CLIVE. Robert Clive was born in Shropshire, England, in 1725. His youth was devoted to mischief. He went to India as a clerk in 1744, became a soldier, showed great courage and consummate skill as a military leader, and built up the English empire in India. He won the battle of Plassey in 1757; and he secured great wealth by means not strictly honest. In England he entered Parliament. His conduct in India was investigated in 1773, and he was acquitted. The opposition he met with, and his excessive use of opium, led to suicide in 1774. England owes to him her vast empire in India.

The story told by Browning is of a well-authenticated character. It was first published in the second edition of the *Biographia Britannica* in a biography of Clive, written by Henry Beaufoy, from family papers and other similar sources of information. This was reproduced substantially in Chalmers's *Biographical Dictionary*. In Malcolm's *Life of Lord Clive*, vol. i. p. 46, it is repeated, and the above authorities referred to, the account being in these words: —

"Soon after his arrival at Fort St. David he was engaged in a duel with an officer, to whom he had lost some money at cards, but who, with his companion, was clearly proved to have played unfairly.

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Clive was not the only loser; but the others were terrified into payment by the threats of those who had won their money. This example had no effect on him; he persisted in refusing to pay, and was called out by one of them, who deemed himself insulted by his conduct. They met without seconds; Clive fired and missed his antagonist, who immediately came close up to him, and held the pistol to his head, desiring him to ask his life, with which he complied. The next demand was to recant his assertions respecting unfair play. On compliance with this being refused, his opponent threatened to shoot him. 'Fire and be damned!' said the dauntless young man; 'I said you cheated; I say so still, and will never pay you.' The astonished officer threw away his pistol, saying Clive was mad. The latter received from his young companions many compliments for the spirit he had shown; but he not only declined coming forward against the officer with whom he had fought, but never afterwards spoke of his behavior at the card-table. 'He has given me my life,' he said, 'and though I am resolved on never paying money which was unfairly won, or again associating with him, I shall never do him an injury.'"

Macaulay, in his essay on Lord Clive, which is based on Malcolm's work, mentions this incident as follows: "His personal courage, of which he had, while still a writer, given signal proof by a desperate duel with a military bully who was the terror of Fort St. David, speedily made him conspicuous even among hundreds of brave men." Colonel Molleson, the latest biographer of Clive, passes this incident by hastily in these words: "Stories have been handed down of the coolness and resolution he displayed at the pastime of card-playing; alike in unmasking a cheat, in putting down a bully, and in meeting good and bad fortune."

Mrs. Orr says the story, as told by Browning, was related to him, in 1846, by Mrs. Jameson, who had shortly before heard it at Lansdowne House from Macaulay. Browning invented the "friend," and the repetition of the story, and wrote the poem a week before the death of Clive.

155: 4, *spoiled the clever foreign game*, that of the French, who opposed the conquest of India by Great Britain. (12) *rummer-glass*, for drinking Rhine wine.

156: 6, *siege of Arcot*, capture of that city by Clive, and destruction of French power in the province of the Carnatic. (13) *bees'-wing*, film to port wine, the amount indicating age. (25) *Clive crumbled slow in London;* failure of his physical powers, partly owing to his hard life in India, and partly to fits of melancholy.

157: 6, *drug-box*, use of opium to secure release from pain.

158: 27, *Thyrsis locked with Chloe*, pastoral lovers introduced so unexpectedly as to produce climax.

162: 29, *rent and taxes for half India*, paid by East India Company to native princes, who were largely under control of French.

163. MULÉYKEH. A story of the Bedouins, told in books of adventure and travel, is here used by the poet. Jabal possessed a mare of great celebrity, which Hassad Pacha, governor of Damascus, wished to buy; but all his offers were refused. Gafar stole the horse, and was paid his nose-bag full of gold as reward. He secured it by creeping into the tent between Jabal and his wife, and gradually

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pushing against each until he had loosened the picket fastened underneath their blanket.

164: 26, *her forefront whitens;* Arab idea that it was fortunate to have a horse with white running down to lip.

165: 21, *I swear by the Holy House,* the family of Mahomet.

167. PIETRO OF ABANO. In writing to Miss Barrett, February 9, 1846, Browning said: "Poor, dear, wonderful, persecuted Pietro d' Abano wrote this quatrain on the people plaguing him about his mathematical studies and wanting to burn him: he helped to build Padua Cathedral; wrote a *Treatise on Magic,* still extant, and passes for a conjurer in his country to this day. When there is a storm, the mothers tell the children that he is in the air; his pact with the Evil One obliged him to drink no milk, — no natural human food! You know Tieck's novel about him? Well, this quatrain is said, I believe truly, to have been discovered in a well near Padua some fifty yeart ago." Browning gives the Italian, and his own translation, as in foot-note to the poem, and adds: "Affecting, is it not, in its simple, child-like plaining?" Then follows Mrs. Browning's translation: —

> "With my compass I take up my ciphers, poor scholar;
> Who myself shall be taken down soon under the ground . .
> Since the world at my learning roars out in its choler,
> And the blockheads have fought me all round."

167: 1, *Petrus Aponensis;* Peter or Pietro of Abano was born in 1250, took his name from the place of his birth, which was located five and a half miles from Padua. He left the village of Abano to study at Padua, then went to Constantinople to acquire Greek, and afterwards he continued his studies in Paris, where he became a doctor of medicine and philosophy. Returning to Padua, he became a professor of medicine, and acquired a great reputation as a physician. He followed the Arabian physicians both in his practice and in the medical works he wrote. He charged enormous prices for his services, and was very avaricious, amassing large wealth. His personal egotism, together with his dabblings in magic and astrology, raised him up many enemies. He gained such a reputation as a magician that he was cited before the Inquisition in 1306. One charge popularly made against him was that his league with the Devil enabled him to bring back into his purse all the money he paid out; and another was, that he possessed the philosopher's stone. He defended himself so successfully before the Inquisition, where he was charged with being a heretic and atheist, that he was acquitted. He removed to Treviso in 1314, but the next year he was again before the Inquisition on a charge similar to the first. He died, however, before he could be brought to trial, in the year 1315. The trial was continued, he was condemned, and his body was ordered to be burnt. A friend had hidden the body, and the Inquisition burnt him in effigy, after promulgating its sentence. He was a follower of Averrhoes and the Arabian writers, he translated their medical works, and he promulgated their philosophical opinions. He was not an original thinker or investigator, but he skilfully used the knowledge he acquired from others. His best work is his *Conciliator differentiarum quae inter philosophos et medicos versantur.* (14) *Petrus ipse,* Peter himself.

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169: 1, *a galley needing neither sails nor oars;* an invention of the poet, probably, as there seems to be no evidence that Peter had anticipated the steamboat. (29) *true moly*, herbs given by Hermes to Odysseus to ward off spells of Kirke, *Odyssey*, x. 367. (32) *iris mystic-lettered*, of which reference Browning wrote: "There is an old superstition that, if you look into the iris of a man's eye, you see the letters of his name, or the word telling his fate." (33) *note my ear, — its swan-shaped cavity*, indication of gift for leadership, as is a swan-like nature.

170: 33, *Petri en pulmones*, lo, the lungs of Peter.

171: 6, *Ipse dixi*, So let it be. (12) *Michael . . . Hans*, scientists of same kind as Peter of Abano.

172: 3, *de corde natus haud de mente*, born of the heart, not of the mind. (26) *Bene*, first syllables of *Benedicite*, grace used by Peter, rest not heard until the Greek wakens.

173: 1, *Plato's tractate, Republic.* (2) *Dog of Egypt*, Anubis, dog-faced god. (33) *Jezebel*, 2 Kings ix. 30. (34) *Jam satis!* Enough now!

174: 30, *Padua's boast*, hall in Palazzo della Ragione, built in 1306 by Frate Giovanni, and decorated by Giotto under directions of Pietro of Abano.

175: 9, *Tantalus's treasure*, evanescent, slips easily away. (30) *bare feet cling to bole with*, boot with curved toe fastened to knee, worn in Middle Age by nobility.

176: 2, *dream Elysian*, shadowy, like Greek idea of Elysian Fields; and hence fanciful honesty, like that of a jockey. (6) *Per Bacco*, by Bacchus. (14) *Salomo si nôsset* (noisset), had Solomon but known this. (19) *Teneor vix*, I scarcely contain myself. (26) *hactenus*, hitherto. (28) *Nec Ultra Plus*, no farther; inscription Heracles put on Pillars of Heracles, according to legend.

177: 15, *the crozier . . . the crow-bill;* the first is shepherd's crook of a bishop, therefore meaning spiritual sway; the other, as a crowbar, means control of earth. (22) *peason*, Old English for peas. (26) *pou stou*, where I may stand, saying of Archimedes.

178: 18, *Lateran*, Palace of the Pope in Rome, as well as head church. (22) *Purple*, color in which a cardinal dresses; *the Conclave*, meeting of College of Cardinals for the election of a new Pope; *saw my coop ope;* at this election, each cardinal has a cell, or coop, during the meeting. (29) *Tithon*, brother of King Priam of Troy, whose beauty caused Aurora to fall in love with him and call him to heaven, secured for him immortality but not perpetual youth: Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 13.

179: 7, *Conciliator Differentiarum*, Pietro's book, Conciliator of Differences. (9) *De Speciebus Ceremonialis Magiæ*, The Kinds of Ceremonial of Magic. (12) *Fisher's ring or foot that boasts the Cross*, the signet ring of the Pope and cross embroidered on his slipper. (19) *Apage, Sathanas*, avaunt, Satan! (20) *Dicam verbum Salomonis*, I command it in the name of Solomon; *dicite*, the closing syllables of the benedicite begun in 172: 26, and indicates the awakening of the young Greek. (21) *What was changed?* The story of the young Greek calling upon Pietro is taken from the legends of the time. A Spanish collection of early stories, *El Conde Lucanor*, gives a similar

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legend, and the poet Chamisso has put into German verse a story of like character. In Bishop Thirlwall's *Letters to a Friend* he relates a story of a similar nature, picked up in Spain: "A young student calls on Don Manuel at Seville, and asks for a spell to get him along in life. Don Manuel calls to his housekeeper, 'Jacinta, roast the partridges. Don Diego will stay to dinner.' The student makes a grand career; is Dean, Bishop, and then Pope soon after he is forty. When Don Manuel calls on him in Rome, he threatens the magician, who has made him, with the prisons of the Holy Office, and then hears Don Manuel call out, 'Jacinta, you need *not* put down the partridges. Don Diego will not stay to dinner.' And, lo! Diego found himself at Don Manuel's door, — with his way yet to make in the world." (26) *Benedicite!* used by boy as sign of good omen. (27) *Idmen, idmen*, we know, we know. (32) *Scientiæ Compendium*, compendium of science. (32) *Admirationem incutit*, it inspires admiration.

180: 4, *axe and fasces;* axe tied with bundle of rods was Roman badge of authority. (5) *antipope*, opposer of the Pope. (11) *Tiberius*, became Emperor of Rome in 14 A. D., of whom Suetonius says in his *Lives of the Cæsars*, in Alexander Thomson's quaint translation: "Soon after, as he was marching to Illyricum, he called to consult the oracle of Geryon, near Patuvium [Padua]; and, having drawn a lot by which he was desired to throw golden *tali* into the fountain of Aponus for an answer to his inquiries, he did so, and the highest numbers came up. And those very *tali* are still to be seen at the bottom of the fountain." This fountain, situated in the Euganian hills, near Padua, famous for its mineral waters, is celebrated by Claudian in one of his elegies. (19) *Venus*, highest throw at dice so called. (21) *not sung, but lilted*, refers to his humming his metres in composing his poems.

181. DOCTOR. The story told in this poem is similar to one contained in Roquette's *Gevatter Tod*, in which a young doctor is befriended by Death, who shows himself at the head of the bed when the patient is to die. The outcome of the story is different, however. Mrs. Orr says it is an old Hebrew legend, founded upon the saying that a bad wife is stronger than death. Professor Toy, Harvard University, sends the author this note: "I have heard of Browning's story of Death (Satan) and his wife, as a Jewish oral legend, apparently invented as a commentary on Ecclesiastes v. 26. I know of no written form of the story."

183: 20, *Galen*, celebrated Greek physician, 130–200.

184: 35, *Machaon redivivus*, Machaon come to life again, physician with Greeks at Troy, *Iliad*, ii. 889, iv. 250.

185: 27, *meal of dust*, Genesis ii. 7, iii. 14.

188: 7, *Talmud*, a Jewish work of history, biography, ceremonials, and Scripture comment, begun about a century before Christ.

188. PAN AND LUNA. Pan was the Greek god of flocks and shepherds, the chief place of his worship being in Arcadia. He had charge of pastoral life, and was intimately associated with it in mythology and poetry. He had a terrific voice, was of a coarse and rude appearance, was fond of noise and riot, slumbered at midday, and was fond of music. Luna was the Roman goddess of the moon,

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fair, delicate, and beautiful. The basis of the poem is an allusion in the third of the *Georgics* of Virgil. The motto is from the same, and means, "If it is proper to be credited," or, "If no disrespect is implied." Probus says that Pan, being in love with Luna, made her a present of his whitest sheep, thus deceiving her, as the whitest fleeces were not unfailing indications of the best sheep. Virgil said, in the translation of Wilstach: —

> "Is wool thy care? See, first, that bushes rough
> And burs and thorns find in thy field no place;
> Nor let the food be rich, and always sheep
> With fleeces soft and white do thou select.
> The ram, although he may a white fleece show,
> Yet 'neath his palate moist may have a tongue
> That 's black; if so, reject thou him, lest spots
> Of darkish hue may stain the lambs' pure coats,
> And round the field look for a better choice.
> Thus (if the tale to credit to the Gods
> No disrepect implies) thee, Luna, Pan,
> Arcadia's God, deceived, and prisoner made,
> Thee in the deep groves wooing with a gift
> Of snowy fleeces soft, thou not at all
> Thy wooer spurning from thy silvery arms."

Browning has taken the brief hint of these last lines from Virgil and expanded them into his poem, giving to Luna a modesty not suggested by the older poet. He translates them near the end of the poem.

189: 35, *Amphitrite's dome* refers to sea, Amphitrite being daughter of Oceanus and wife of Poseidon.

193. WANTING IS — WHAT? (9) *O comer* is one of the titles of the Messiah in the New Testament. He is called ὁ ἐρχόμενος, the Future One, He who shall come, in Matthew xi. 3, Luke vii. 19, and in other passages.

DONALD. This hunting anecdote was told to Browning by one who had heard it from the so-called Donald himself. It is related in detail by Sir Walter Scott, in *The Keepsake* for 1832, an annual published in London. Browning follows the story very closely as it is told by Scott. (5) *bothy*, hut of boughs built for shooting. (10) *trivet*, tripod from which to hang kettle. (12) *Glenlivet*, Scotch whiskey.

194: 30, *Double-First*, honors in two branches at universities.

195: 15, *Ben*, Gaelic for mountain.

197: 9, *volte-face*, turn-about-face. (12) *Blondin*, celebrated rope-walker forty years ago.

199: 11, *tines*, forks of the deer's horns. (34) *as Homer would say*, *Odyssey*, i. 63.

200. SOLOMON AND BALKIS. This legend is based on 1 Kings x. 1–13, and 2 Chronicles ix. 1, and is one of the many stories told of Solomon and the Queen of Sheba or Balkis. Especially in the Mohammedan legends, which have grown up out of the Old Testament narratives, has Balkis found a prominent place. As she there appears, she is a person of much importance, and marvellous are the tales told of her. In the *Talmud* somewhat less exaggerated stories are told, and Jami's *Sálámán and Absal* gives such a legend. The conversation of the poem contains an amount of humor such as does

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not appear in the Talmudic or other legends. There is no reason for supposing that Solomon spoke Greek, as Browning makes him do.

200: 10, *vulgo conster*, to construe in vulgar or common speech. (12) *spheteron do*, his home.

201: 4, *wimple*, plaited hood. (8) *Ring which bore the Name*, signet ring, having magical power because containing secret name of God. (22) *habitat*, place of habitation. (24) *hyssop*, the caper or *asuf* of Arabs.

202. CRISTINA AND MONALDESCHI. This poem is based on a well-known historical incident. Christina was daughter of Gustavus Adolphus of Sweden, and succeeded him on the throne in 1632. She refused to marry, abdicated in 1654, but retained royal control over her own servants. Her master of horse was the Marquis Monaldeschi; and while living in the palace of Fontainebleau, in 1657, she accused him of treason, and caused his death by stabbing. Gossip made Monaldeschi the lover of the queen, who caused his death because he had deserted her for others; but probably there was no truth in this. The poem is spoken to Monaldeschi by Cristina, who describes Francis I. and his favorite mistress, Diana of Poitiers. (5) *Quis separabit?* Who shall separate? motto on frame of a picture in the gallery of the palace. (13) *Crescent with Salamander-sign;* her emblem was Diana and her crescent moon; his, a salamander eating fire.

205: 5, *Juno strikes Ixion;* when Ixion made love to Juno she struck him, as in Browning's *Ixion*, lines 79-83. (6) *Primatice*, Francesco Primaticcio, 1504–1570, fresco painter at Fontainebleau. (7) *Florentine Le Roux;* the Florentine painter Rossi is meant. (12) *Gallery of the Deer*, in Royal Chateau at Fontainebleau, *La Galerie des Cerfs*. (16) *Avon*, village near Fontainebleu; *blessed and cursed faith and falsehood;* in the account of the death of Monaldeschi published by Cristina's Court, as giving her version of the affair, occurs the following: "The Queen made pretence of believing that the treachery came from that other, and assured the Marquis she had no doubts of himself, in order the better to discover all. The Marquis, thinking he had succeeded in his object, said one day to the Queen: 'Madam, your Majesty is betrayed, and the betrayer is the absent one known to your Majesty and me; and it can be no other. Your Majesty will soon find out who it is; I beg her not to pardon him.' The Queen said: 'What does the man deserve who betrays me?' The Marquis said: 'Your Majesty should put him to death at once, and I offer myself to be the executioner or victim, for 't is an act of justice.' 'Good,' replied the Queen, 'remember your words; as for me, I promise you I will not pardon him.' "

206. MARY WOLLSTONECRAFT AND FUSELI. Mary Wollstonecraft, 1759–1797, author of *The Rights of Woman*, was the wife of William Godwin, and mother of Shelley's second wife, a woman of great ability and genius. Fuseli, 1741–1825, was a Swiss by birth, a mediocre painter, a lecturer and author. Early biographers of Mary Wollstonecraft reported that she was deeply in love with Fuseli and urged herself upon his attention, although he had a wife living. Kegan Paul, in his biography of Godwin, and Mrs. Pennell in her

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biography of Mary Wollstonecraft, discredit these stories, finding no basis for them.

207. ADAM, LILITH, AND EVE. According to Jewish tradition, Adam had a wife before Eve. This was the wife created with himself out of clay. Later Eve was created from his side, and remained his mate. Browning uses nothing of the legend but the names, except in the contrasted characters of the two women and the man.

IXION. According to Greek mythology, Ixion was the son of Phlegyas; his wife was a daughter of Deianeus. He was king of the Lapithæ or Phlegyæ, and the father of Peirithous. When Deianeus demanded of Ixion the bridal gifts he had promised, Ixion treacherously invited him as if to a banquet, and then contrived to make him fall into a pit filled with fire. All the gods were indignant at Ixion for this cruel murder, and no one of them would purify him until Zeus did so. Then Zeus invited Ixion to his table; but the latter was ungrateful, and attempted to secure the love of Hera. When Zeus knew of this, he made an apparition resembling his wife, who became the mother of a centaur. In order that Ixion might be punished for his crime, and for his want of gratitude, Hermes chained him by his hands and feet to a wheel that was fiery or winged. This wheel constantly rolled through the air in the lower world. Ixion was also scourged, and compelled constantly to repeat these words, "Benefactors should be honored." Browning makes Ixion represent man's righteous revolt against the tyranny of an unjust God.

208: 3, *All for a purpose of hate;* this was the attitude of Zeus toward man, according to several Greek myths. (16) *Sisuphos,* condemned to punishment in Hades for deceiving Zeus, that of rolling a stone to top of hill only to find it fall back again; *Tantalos* insulted the gods, and was punished by standing in water to his chin but unable to drink, and to see fruits before his eyes he could not reach.

209: 28, *forfeit through arrogance,* conceit of Ixion in presuming to aspire to place of Zeus.

210: 8, *Olumpos to Erebos,* from home of gods to region of primeval darkness.

211. JOCHANAN HAKKADOSH. This poem is purely a piece of invention, although it has the appearance of being drawn from the *Talmud.* The author has given various realistic touches to the poem by means of quotations, historic references, and biographic details. Browning himself wrote that the two Hebrew quotations were "put in to give a grave look to what is mere fun and invention." "Much heart-breaking has been caused by the bad Hebrew of the title," says Joseph Jacobs in the *Jewish Quarterly Review,* "but Browning would probably have given the Johnsonian explanation: 'Ignorance, madam, ignorance.' As some indication of the slightness of his acquaintance with Hebrew idiom, I may mention that he was going to call his Jochanan 'Hakkadosh Jochanan' (=John Saint). Through a common friend I pointed out the error of the poet, and the adjective was put in its proper position. The fact seems to be that Browning could read his Hebrew Bible, and that was about the extent of his Hebrew learning, though it was a foible of his to give an impressio

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of recondite learning." (2) *Mishna*, that part of the *Talmud* devoted to doctrine, which the word means, that is, to those ordinances and regulations determining the ritualistic observances of the Jews after the destruction of Jerusalem; *Jew aforesaid*, named in the title, who was probably Judah Hannasi, sometimes called Rabbi Yehudah and also "The Prince." He was more frequently known, however, as "Hakkadosh," or holy, and he was called "Jochanan," or John. He lived during the second century A. D., and is the supposed author of the *Mishna*. (12) *eximious*, elect; *Jochanan Ben Sabbathai*, fictitious, but intended as a representative Jew of the time.

213:35, *Khubbezleh*, imaginary.

214:30, *Targums*, paraphrases or translations of *Old Testament* into Aramaic, with Talmudic interpretations. (32) *Nine Points of Perfection*, probably a reference to the seven points of perfection mentioned in that part of the *Mishna* called the *Pirke Aboth*.

215:18, *Tsaddik*, not historical, the use of olive-branch before his name indicating youthfulness. (22) *Job to Satam*, succession of Hebrew thinkers. (24) *Dob*, bear, here used for constellation of that name, but not so used in Old Testament or *Talmud*. (26) *Aish* (spelled *Aisch* on page 229, line 25), Great Bear, but the Arabic meaning of "The Bier" is here given the word. (28) *Banoth*, daughters. (30) *the east-cone rolled*, movement of Bear about the Pole-star, and the movement of the dying man, by analogy, around the place of peace.

216:6, *Old Just Ones*, ten Jewish martyrs who suffered under Hadrian. (13) *Akiba*, a famous rabbi, one of the ten martyrs who took part in the insurrection under Barcokheba and was captured; according to the *Mishna*, his flesh was scraped from his bones by the Romans with an iron comb. During his torture he repeated constantly the declaration of the unity of God. (15) *Jischab*, probably Yoshobeb, another of the ten martyrs. (26) *plant our lion-flag*, that of the tribe of Judah, planted on Mount Zion when David took it from the Jebusites.

217:17, *Perida;* of him it is related in the *Talmud* that he repeated his teaching to a dull pupil four hundred times, and again the same number, when he still failed to comprehend it, whereupon a supernatural voice declared that four hundred (not five hundred) years should be added to his life. (23) *Uzzean*, from Uz, place of Job's residence, therefore like him in patience.

218:22, *rudesby*, rude boy. (26) *awoke in health:* "I got an American paper last night," wrote Browning in 1883, "wherein there is repeated that Jochanan revived by 'a transfusion of blood.' There is not a word about such a thing; on the contrary, the account in the poem makes it impossible. How could the 'transfusion' bring experiences with it? or how could the boy's gift, 'which he threw and it stuck,' be taken in that manner? This comes of the critics reading attentively the criticisms of their brethren, and paying no attention at all to the text criticised. The writer of the article in *The Times* made the mistake first, and even *The Academy* article must needs follow him. The whole story is a fiction of my own, with just this foundation, — that the old Rabbins fancied that earnest wishing might add to a valued life."

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221: 15, *sycamine*, fig-tree.

222: 21, *Djinn*, Arabic genie, a supernatural creature.

223: 2, *Edom's children*, Romans or Christians, in the *Talmud* Edom being the name given to both Rome and Christianity. (3) *Sic Jesus vult*, so bids Jesus, in Matthew v. 36.

227: 5, *Ahithophel*, Absalom's companion in his conspiracy against David, 2 Samuel xv. 31. (23) *Shimei*, 2 Samuel xvi. 5. (30) *alkahest*, the universal solvent sought for by the alchemists by which to turn base metal into gold.

228: 21, *Mizraim*, Egypt. (22) *Goshen*, region in Egypt inhabited by Hebrews.

230: 7, *Shushan*, lily.

231: 22, *tohu-bohu*, void and waste, Genesis i. 2.

232: 24, *rape*, that of Ixion on cloud made by Zeus.

233: 6, *Halaphta*, the name of several Talmudic teachers. (9) *Ruach*, breath, soul, or spirit. (30) *Schiphaz, on Bendimir, in Farzistan*, seems to be an imaginary city on river Bundemeer, flowing into Persian Gulf.

The prose note sufficiently indicates the origin of the poem in saying its sources are "existing dispersedly in fragments of Rabbinical writing," and in the use of the two Hebrew titles, the first being "A Collection of Many Lies," and the second "From Moses to Moses arose none like to Moses," the second Moses being Moses Mendelsohn. Joseph Jacobs says of the three sonnets: "Attached to *Jochanan Hakkadosh* are three sonnets on the well-known Talmudic Lügenmärchen, to use the folk-lore term, of the legend of Og's bones and bedstead. They are said to be from a work which I need scarcely say neither exists nor could exist under such a title."

235. PAMBO. The story of Pambo is first told in the *Ecclesiastical History* of Socrates, book iv. chap. xxiii., which contains "A list of holy monks who devoted themselves to a solitary life." In this chapter Socrates gives an account of the monks of Egypt, as they existed in the year 373, and relates many anecdotes of them. Of Pambo he says, as translated in Bohn's *Ecclesiastical Library*: "Pambos, being an illiterate man, went to some one for the purpose of being taught a psalm; and having heard the first verse of the thirty-eighth, 'I said I will take heed to my ways, that I offend not with my tongue,' he departed without staying to hear the second verse, saying this one would suffice if he could practically acquire it. And when the person who had given him the verse reproved him because he had not seen him for the space of six months, he answered that he had not yet learnt to practice the verse of the psalm. After a considerable lapse of time, being asked by one of his friends whether he had made himself master of the verse, his answer was: 'I have scarcely succeeded in accomplishing it during nineteen years.' A certain individual, having placed gold in his hands for distribution to the poor, requested him to reckon what he had given him. 'There is no need of counting,' said he, 'but of integrity of mind.' The same Pambos, at the desire of Athanasius the bishop, came out of the desert to Alexandria; and on beholding an actress there, he wept. When those present asked the reason of his doing so, he replied: 'Two causes have affected me: one is, the destruction of this woman;

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the other is, that I exert myself less to please my God than she does please wanton characters.'" (2) *crambo*, rhyming to a given word.

236: 8, *Nine-and-thirtieth*, Psalm xxxix. 1.

237: 6, *Arcades sumus ambo*, We are both Arcadians, Virgil, *Eclogues*, vii.

239. FERISHTAH'S FANCIES: PROLOGUE. The valley of the Aosta, in which this poem was written, is in the northern part of Piedmont, Italy. (1) *ortolans*, garden buntings, very common in Italy; songsters and used for food. When fattened, this bird is a mere lump of fat, of a luscious flavor, and is highly prized by gourmands. (38) *Gressoney*, a village in the Aosta valley.

240. THE EAGLE. Based on one of *The Fables of Pilpay*, which relates that a dervish in his youth, passing through a wood, saw a falcon, holding a piece of flesh in his beak, tear it in bits, and feed a young raven that lay bald and featherless in his nest. There follow comments on the goodness of the Creator. (1) *dervish*, a Mohammedan religious mendicant, wandering the country or living in a monastery. He begs from door to door, and the name means "the sill of the door." (6) *Ferishtah*, imaginary.

241: 11, *Ispahan*, city of Persia, in seventeenth century was important, being capital of Irak.

242. THE MELON-SELLER. (21) *Nishapur*, small city in province of Khorassan; *Elbruz*, mountain peak near Nishapur. (27) *Persian phrase;* the Hebrew is from Job i. 10, the quoted words being a translation of the Hebrew. The Prime Minister of the Shah become a seller of melons was also probably suggested by the Book of Job.

242. SHAH ABBAS. A ruler of Persia by this name reigned from 1584 to his death in 1628. He conquered the Turks and Tartars, and widely extended his kingdom. The story told of him is fictitious.

243: 3, *Lord Ali*, cousin of Mohammed, and one of his chief supporters. (44) *Zal*, a character in the *Shah Nameh*.

244: 34, *Tahmasp*, character in *Shah Nameh*, but incidents are fictitious. (37) *Zurah*, Persian name of Venus.

245: 7, *Ishak*, imaginary person. (10) *Yezdt*, fortified city in province of Irak. (15) *Mubid*, Persian magician.

246. THE FAMILY. (4) *Gudarz*, character in *Shah Nameh*, but here used fictitiously.

247: 5, *Shiraz*, once capital of Persia, now of province of Fars; at one time prosperous and splendid; home of Saadi and Hafiz. (33) *Hakim*, Mohammedan Messiah.

249. THE SUN. (10) *during our ignorance*, reference to period of fire-worship. In the *Shah Nameh* it is described how Husheng instituted the worship of fire and established the sacred flame. The passage indicates the source of Browning's symbolism: —

> "Passing, one day, towards the mountain's side,
> Attended by his train, surprised he saw
> Something in aspect terrible, — its eyes
> Fountains of blood; its dreadful mouth sent forth
> Volumes of smoke that darkened all the air.
> Fixing his gaze upon that hideous form,
> He seized a stone, and with prodigious force
> Hurling it, chanced to strike a jutting rock,

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Whence sparks arose, and presently a fire
O'erspread the plain, in which the monster perished.
Thus Husheng found the element which shed
Light through the world. The monarch prostrate bowed,
Praising the great Creator for the good
Bestowed on man, and, pious, then he said,
This is the Light from Heaven, sent down from God;
If ye be wise, adore and worship it!"

253. MIHRAB SHAH. This person is an invention, but the poem draws largely upon the *Shah Nameh* for its mythological symbolism and atmosphere. (27) *Firdausi*, one of the greatest Persian poets, 941–1020, whose real name was Abu 'l Cásin Mansur, the author of the *Shah Nameh*, or "Book of Kings."

255: 10, *Simorgh*, a fabulous creature of Persian mythology, noted for its benevolence and its ability to bestow magical powers. It has a large part in the *Shah Nameh*, where it is the nurse of Zal when he is abandoned by his father Sam, on account of his having white hair, the color of evil in Persia. (21) *Tebriz*, an ancient and important city, capital of province of Azerbaijan.

257. A CAMEL-DRIVER. (1) *soldier-guide*, imaginary person.

258: 5, *Rakhsh*, the horse of Rustem, the great hero of the *Shah Nameh*. He was the offspring of Abresh, and born of a Diw, or Demon. Rustem subdued him after great difficulty, but found in him ever after a most trusty companion, that carried him through all his marvellous adventures.

260. TWO CAMELS. (261: 23) *chervil*, small plant like European chervil, probably Myrrhis Odorata. (41) *Lilith*, mythological first wife of Adam.

262: 20, *Adversary*, Satan, Job i. 9. (22) *Does Job fear God for naught?* translation of preceding Hebrew, Job i. 9. (27) מאל חים, me Elohim, from Elohim, one of the names of God used in Genesis. (39) *seven-stringed instrument;* Greek lyre had this number of strings, but the reference may be to seven tones forming musical scale. (40) *chemist take a pinch of powder*, exaggerates character of unstable nitro-compounds, which would take gaseous form on application of concentrated sulphuric acid.

263. CHERRIES. (19) *Mushtari*, Persian name for the planet Jupiter.

265. PLOT-CULTURE. (5) *Laila*, creation of the poet.

267. A PILLAR AT SEBZEVAR. This is a fortified town of the province of Khorassan, Persia.

269: 28, *Hudhud*, fabulous bird of Solomon, according to Hebrew and Mohammedan mythology.

270: 43, *Sitara*, Persian for star.

271. A BEAN-STRIPE; ALSO APPLE-EATING. (17) *Indian Sage*, Sakya Muni, or Buddha, who, in his conception of the world, was a pessimist.

274: 37, *palm-aphis*, plant-lice.

278: 9, *Ahriman*, the Persian Satan, or personification of evil. (10) *Ormuzd*, the Persian Deity or God of good, who opposes and will conquer Ahriman.

280: 18, *Shalim-Shah*, the Persian for "King of kings."

281: 7, *Rustem, Gew, and Gudarz*, heroes in the *Shah Nameh*. (10]

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Sindokht, the wife of Mihrab, one of the mythological characters in the *Shah-Nameh*. She was the mother of Rudabeh, whose love for Zal forms one of the most romantic episodes in the epic. Sindokht was politic and skilful as a match-maker, and brought the two young people together as she desired. *Sulayman*, a character in the *Shah-Nameh*. (11) *Kawah*, the blacksmith who raises the standard of revolt, consisting of his own apron, against the tyrannies of Zohak, in the *Shah-Nameh*. Kawah, who was remarkably strong and brave, was aided by Feridun, and these two were able to overcome the evil king. (23) *Seven Thrones*, Ursa Major; *Zurah*, Persian Venus; *Parwin*, Pleiades.

282: 3, *Fomalhaut*, bright star in constellation of Southern Fish. (13) *Zerdusht*, Zoroaster, the founder of the national religion of Persia.

285. APOLLO AND THE FATES. Browning has brought together the references to the doom of Admetus, as described in the *Alcestis* of Euripides and elsewhere, and undertakes to show how Apollo wins from the Fates permission for him to live. (1) *Parnassus*, mountain in Phocis, sacred to the Muses. (4) *Dire Ones*, Fates. (5) *Admetus*, King of Thessaly, who was served by Apollo for a year as shepherd as punishment for shooting at Cyclops and thus offending Zeus, who had killed his son Æsculapius for having brought to life a dead person. Admetus won his wife Alcestis by going for her in a chariot drawn by lions and bears, a condition made by her father Pelias. When Admetus fell ill, and was about to die, Apollo sought of the Fates release from his doom. (6) *our Mother;* Night was mother of the Fates. (16) *woe-purfled*, embroidered with woe; *weal-prankt* decked out with prosperity. (23) *Moirai*, Fates, in Greek.

286: 4, *goddess-sent plague*, vengeance of Artemis, woven into destiny of Admetus by Lachesis, because he had not offered her the proper sacrifices, consisting of an army of serpents that came upon him on his marriage day; but Apollo secured a reconciliation.

290: 26, *Semele's son . . . fathered by Zeus*, Dionysus.

291: 35, *cummers*, gossips.

292: 3, *collyrium*, for dyeing the eyebrows.

294: 16, *Pheræ*, Thessalian town reigned over by Pheres, father of Admetus.

295. WITH BERNARD DE MANDEVILLE. This writer was born in Rotterdam, Holland, in 1670; graduated in medicine at Leyden; settled in London as physician soon after. He wrote various satirical pieces, but in 1705 appeared his *The Grumbling Hive, or Knaves Turned Honest*, a defence of the war-policy of the Duke of Marlborough, attempting to prove that ambition and self-seeking were necessary to the prosperity of the state. His work was republished in 1723 with the title of *The Fable of the Bees, or Private Vices Public Benefits*. His book was indicted by the grand jury, and it was severely attacked by moralists. His position is clearly defined by Ueberweg: "What is called a vice is in fact a public benefit. There is no distinction between the moral impulses or springs of action. Each in its place is natural and legitimate, and the general welfare is best promoted by giving indulgence to all. The restraints on human passions by the magistrate and the priest are factitious and

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unnatural. Any restraint upon private vices is simply usurpation." Mandeville died in 1733.

296: 36, *Addison's tye-wig preachment*, views commonly held by the respectable.

298: 7, *mandrake-monster*, folk-lore that roots of mandrake are shaped like human beings.

300: 1, *myth may teach*, in manner of Euripides, who used the myths freely and symbolically, rather than in the literal manner of Æschylus.

302: 10, *thus moaned man*, refers to Greek myth that man was taught by Prometheus and by him furnished with fire.

303. With Daniel Bartoli. Daniel Bartoli, 1608–1685, wrote an extensive history of the Jesuits, and a work much admired by Browning in his youth, *De' Simboli transportati al Morale;* he was also the Rector of the Roman College. Browning uses Bartoli simply as a person to whom to direct his views about saints, because he showed so much credulity concerning those approved by the church. The saint approved by the poet was Marianne Pajot, who was married to Charles of Lorraine, but court intrigues separated them, and she would not compromise the duke in order to be made a duchess. Her conduct was so much admired by the Marquis de Lassay that he married her, and they lived happily together. De Lassay was conspicuous in the military annals of his time, and he was also known by his amatory career, including an intrigue with Sophia Dorothea, who became Queen of George I.

305: 30, *pari passu*, with equal pace.

309: 13, *Saint Scholastica*, sister of Saint Benedict. (14) *Paynimrie*, Infidel, Mohammedans. (41) *Trogalia*, sweetmeats, fruits.

312. With Christopher Smart. This little known English poet, 1722–1770, was an editor and hack writer in London, poor and intemperate, for a time in a madhouse, and versified the fables of Phædrus, turned Horace into English prose, wrote a satire called *The Hilliard*, and one poem of original merit. His *Song to David* was published in 1763, and was at least in part composed in the madhouse. William Rossetti called this poem "a masterpiece of rich imagery, exhaustive resources, and reverberant sound." Browning makes the *Song to David* the subject of his poem, and accepts the tradition of its being written without pen and paper, and scratched upon the wall of his cell with a key.

314: 15, *Leighton*, a recent English artist. (14) *Watts*, a painter contemporary with Browning.

315: 1, *Hayley*, biographer of Cowper, and author of essays on *Painting, Sculpture, and Epic Poetry*.

316: 32, *So, indeed;* these words begin a quotation, though not literal, from Smart's poem on the *Attributes of the Supreme Being*.

318. With George Bubb Dodington. George Bubb was born in 1691, took the name of Dodington on the death of an uncle who left him a large estate, and entered Parliament at the age of twenty-four. He held various positions of importance under government, especially in connection with the navy; was two or three times in the ministry; was intimately connected with Frederic, Prince of Wales; and was made Baron Melcombe in 1761. He controlled five votes in Parliament, because of the position of his family, and these he

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used in whatever way would be the most to his own advantage. He changed sides in politics whenever advancement could be secured by so doing. He was given to intrigue and political servility. The editor of his *Diary* says that his political conduct was "wholly directed by the base motives of avarice, vanity, and selfishness." Another writer says that "never was such a composition of vanity, versatility, and servility." He did not follow principle or consistency; his whole aim in life was political preferment and the securing of a title. So well was this understood that, when he appeared at court, George II. said: "I see Dodington here sometimes; what does he come for?" On one occasion, when Horace Walpole was discussing the majority in Parliament, he said: "I do not count Dodington, who must now always be in the minority, for no majority will accept him." Fielding and Bentley condescended to flatter him, for he aspired to become a patron of literature and literary men; and he left no means unused so to secure the praise which his vanity and his ambition found helpful to his political prosperity. He was a writer of verses, and he had a high reputation as a wit. He lived in luxury and made a great display of his wealth. His private life, however, was as mean and treacherous as was his public career. After living with Mrs. Behan for seventeen years, he acknowledged that he had been married to her all the time, but that he was unable to acknowledge his marriage, because he had given a large bond to another lady that he would marry no one else. In fact, his sole aim in life was to push his own interests, and "to make some figure in the world." His character is very correctly described by Browning in his poem. He secured the height of his ambition when he was made Baron Melcombe; but he died the next year, in 1762.

320: 5, *Darwin*, the great naturalist, in his *Origin of Species*. (6) *bower-birds*, starlings of Australia, so called because their nests are built in form of bowers. (43) *coprolite*, petrified excrement of carnivorous reptiles.

324: 29, *æs triplex*, triple armor.

325: 1, *quid vis?* what do you want?

326: 33, *Ventum est ad triarios*. It is come to the third rank.

328. WITH FRANCIS FURINI. Italian artist, 1604–1649, who treated artificial and mythological subjects; had a special fondness for the nude, which he attempted to deal with in an inoffensive manner, but was sometimes wanting in refinement. He became a priest and died a parish curate. On his death-bed he asked that all his undraped pictures be destroyed, but this request was not complied with. Nettleship says: "This poem contains a splendid attack on the prurient modesty which finds lust to be the chief motive power in the production of all great statues or pictures from the nude. But its main purpose, with which indeed the bulk of the poem is occupied, lies in a closely reasoned argument designed to prove the absolute necessity for understanding the bodily life of man before you can penetrate to his soul, and thence to deduce by reasonable inference the existence, outside but not within man, though ever in touch with him, of an infinitely wise, strong, and loving First Cause, or God." (6) *Saint Sano's church*, that of Saint Ansano, in the Mugello. (7) *Mugello*, in Tuscany.

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329:7, *Agnolo*, Michael Angelo. (40) *Filippo*, Baldinucci, artist, author of *Italian History of Art*, from which Browning drew his materials for this poem.

332:10, *Night and Morn*, marble figures in chapel of San Lorenzo Church, Rome. (13) *Eve*, painting of creation of Eve on ceiling of Sistine Chapel by Michael Angelo.

339:20, *Andromeda*, sacrificed to a sea monster, according to the myth. (31) *some old artificer* refers especially to Zeuxis, but is suggested by the generally realistic character of Greek art.

341:26, *Sainte-Beuve*, famous French critic, 1804–1869; *Quicherat*, editor of documents regarding trial of Joan of Arc, 1841–1849. (31) *D'Alençon*, a follower of the Duke of that name, Percival de Cagny, wrote an account of Joan of Arc published by Quicherat.

342:11, *Omnia non omnibus*, All is not for all.

343. With Gerard de Lairesse. Dutch painter, 1640–1711, highly esteemed for his social qualities, and is regarded as one of the great painters of Holland. He largely treated allegorical and mythological subjects, and was fanciful and unreal in his methods. Towards the end of his life he became blind; but he had his friends about him, and many artists. His sayings were noted down by his companions, and his vivacious discourses on art thus given were published, after his death, as his *Treatise on the Art of Painting*. This work was translated into English in 1778, and was read by Browning when a boy with great interest and satisfaction.

344:17, *Faustus' robe*, that worn by Faustus when he was wafted through the air with Mephistopheles. (18) *Fortunatus' cap*, hero of sixteenth century German romance, who had gift of purse always full, and cap that would carry him wherever he wished.

345:3, *Chariot of the Sun*, in myth of Phaeton, Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, x.

346:4, *Dryope*, when gathering flowers, picked one that bled, that proved to be nymph Lotis escaping a pursuer, who changed Dryope also into a lotus. Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, ix. (27) *acquists*, acquisitions.

347:11, *Protoplast*, originator or creator. (38) *Jove's feathered fury*, vulture sent to prey on Prometheus.

349:38, *O Satyr*, myth told by Moschus, in Lang's translation, as follows:—

> "Pan loved his neighbor, Echo; Echo loved
> A gamesome Satyr; he by her unmoved,
> Loved only Lyde; thus through Echo, Pan,
> Lyde and Satyr, Love his circle ran.
> Thus all, while their true lovers' hearts are grieved,
> Were scorned in turn, and what they gave received."

350:40, *Macedonian*, Alexander the Great.

352:6, *dream afresh;* "this passage," say the editors of *Poet-Lore*, "might be taken as a hit at the attitude of Matthew Arnold, who always sighed for the good old classic days." (20) *a wretched nothing*, refers to failure of Greek art, because of its incapacity for development. (34) *be dead with me, as with Achilles;* when, in Hades, Odysseus consoles Achilles because he is still a prince, he replies that he would prefer to be a serf among the living rather than ruler over the dead. *Odyssey*, xi.

354. With Charles Avison. This English composer, 1710-

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1770, studied music in Italy, and became a pupil of Geminiani on his return. In 1736 he became the organist of St. Nicholas Church at Newcastle, and in that position the remainder of his life was spent. In 1752 he published an *Essay on Musical Expression*, which was well written, showing much acuteness of thought, and in which he praised French and Italian music, preferring it to the German. It created quite a stir, was translated into German, and was replied to by Dr. Hayes, a musical critic of the day. To Dr. Hayes, Avison gave answer, but not with entire success. He gave a higher position to Geminiani than to Handel. Avison published five collections of *Concertos for a Full Band*, forty-five in all; and two sets of sonatas for the harpsichord and two violins. He had a considerable reputation both as a critic and as a composer of music. His music is light and elegant, but wanting in originality. He also published, in eight volumes, an adaptation of Marcello's *Psalms*, to the first of which an account of his own life was prefixed. Mr. Barnett Smith says that "very little is known of his life, but he had the reputation of being a man of great culture and polish, and for many years was the chief of a small circle of musical amateurs in the north of England who were devoted to his views."

355: 15, "*March;*" this *Grand March* of Avison's is the subject of the poem; a copy in MS. was possessed by Browning's father, and the music is given at the end of the poem.

356: 3, *Great John Relf*, Browning's teacher in music, and a learned contrapuntist. (6) *to fitly figure such a bass*, writing a bass with figures to each note to indicate chords to be written over them. (10) *Tonic down to Dominant;* in the *March* the harmony begins on the tonic and falls to dominant, the simplest possible succession of chords. (22) *Brahms, Wagner, Dvorak, Liszt*, German composers of the present century. (23) *Handel reigns supreme* refers to competition for public favor between Handel and Buononcini when they were in London together, music-lovers dividing into two parties to defend their favorite. (27) *Geminiani*, violin-player and composer, who was in England in 1714. (29) *Pepusch*, musical composer famous in England on appearance there of Handel, and who then retired to devote himself to teaching the laws of musical composition.

357: 1, *Suite*, series of musical compositions. (2) *Fugue*, composition in which one theme is repeated with many variations. (13) *Hesperus*, song to evening star in Wagner's *Tannhäuser*.

359: 21, *But where are they*, quoted from Pope's *Iliad*, iii. 301. (27) *Painter's fresco*, Creation of Eve, on ceiling of Sistine Chapel, in Rome, by Michael Angelo.

360: 2, *Radaminta*, probably Handel's opera *Radamista*, containing popular air in which a husband mourns his wife dead. (4) *Rinaldo*, one of Handel's operas. (19) *Gluck, Haydn, Mozart*, German composers of the eighteenth century.

361: 8, *discords and resolutions;* discord or dissonance in music is followed by resolution or concord. (10) *modulate (no Bach in awe)*; Bach composed in strict contrapuntal method before laws of modulation were developed. (11) *change enharmonically (Hudl to thank)*; this German musician wrote *A Tabular View of Modulation from any one Key to all other Keys, Major to Minor*, and so helped develop the

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laws of harmonic change. (15) *Largo*, very slow movement. (16) *Rubato*, movement expressing ebb and flow of feeling in limited time. (18) *Georgian years*, when the Georges were kings of England. (39) *Purcell*, English composer, 1658–1695.

363: 10, *ophicleide*, bass-horn; *bombardon*, low-pitched basson or lowest-pitched sax-horn. (17) *Little-ease*, cells in which prisoners could neither lie down nor stand up; *Tyburn*, place of executions in London. (25) *Larges and Longs and Breves*, notes used in Middle Ages, *large* having oblong square with stem; *long*, square with stem at right; *breve*, a small square without stem. (35) *Hollis*, etc., Parliamentary leaders in time of Charles I. (37) *Southwark*, district where trained bands were prepared for quelling mobs and riots.

366. FUST AND HIS FRIENDS: AN EPILOGUE. Johann Fust was born of a rich burgher family of Mainz, or Mayence, but the year is not known. He became a banker, but his brother Jacob was a goldsmith. He was a money-lender and speculator, and it was as such he first came into connection with Gutenberg, the real inventor of printing. It was about 1440 that Gutenberg began his experiments which led to the invention of printing; but in 1448 he had exhausted his financial resources, and borrowed money of Fust. In 1449 Fust loaned Gutenberg a large sum, and agreed to give him three hundred florins a year, and was to receive half profits. Fust did not keep his part of the agreement, but in 1455 brought suit against Gutenberg, which resulted in a verdict in his favor. Fust moved his part of the printing materials to his house called Zum Humbreicht in Mainz, and there began to do printing with the aid of Peter Schoeffer. He first printed the *Psalter*, which came from the press August 14, 1457, a folio of 350 pages, which was the first printed book with a complete date. It is now believed that Gutenberg did a part of the work on this book before his separation from Fust, and that its beauty of workmanship was owing to this fact.

Trithemius, writing in 1514, says of the event which is described in the poem: "Peter Schoeffer, at that time a workman, but afterward son-in-law of the first inventor, John Fust, a man skilful and ingenious, devised a more easy method of founding types, and thus gave the art its present perfection. And the three men [Gutenberg, Fust, and Schoeffer] kept secret among themselves, for a while, this method of printing, up to the time when their workmen were deprived of the work, without which they were unable to practice their trade, by whom it was divulged, first in Strasburg and afterward in other cities."

Another writer, said to be Jo. Frid. Faustus, a nephew of Fust, gave this account of the invention: "Fust had many workmen, among whom was Peter Schoeffer of Gernsheim, who, when he perceived the difficulties and delays of his master, was seized with an ardent desire to accomplish the success of the new art. Through the special inspiration of God, he discovered the secret by which types of the matrix, as they are called, could be cut, and types could be founded from them, which, for this purpose, could be composed in frequent combinations, and not be singly cut as they had been before. Schoeffer secretly cut matrices of the alphabet, and showed types cast therefrom to his master, John Fust, who was so greatly pleased

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with them, and rejoiced so greatly, that he immediately promised to him his only daughter, and soon after he gave her to him in marriage. But even with this kind of type, great difficulty was experienced. The metal was soft and did not withstand pressure, until they invented an alloy which gave it proper strength. As they had happily succeeded in this undertaking, Fust and Schoeffer bound their workmen by oath to conceal the process with great secrecy; but they showed to friends, whenever it pleased them, the first experimental types of wood, which they tied up with a string and preserved." Browning has accepted the Fust account as the correct one, though it has been proven at fault in many particulars, as is shown fully in De Vinne's and Humphrey's books on the history of printing. Other untrue statements have been made about Fust being accused of magic and opposed by the monks. Browning connects Fust with the mythological Faust. (12) *sib*, relation.

367: 19, *palinodes*, figuratively used for recantation.

368: 7, *Barnabite*, religious order in Catholic Church. (14) *Sir Belial*, Satan. (17) *Helen of Troy*, marriage of Faust and Helen in Goethe's *Faust*, second part, symbol of wedding of classic and romantic art.

369: 4, *out of table sprouted vine*, incident in Auerbach's cellar, first part of *Faust*. (16) *skinker*, one who pours out liquors. (20) *Rhenish . . . Raphal*, kinds of wine. (31) *strange honors*, experience of Faust in second part of Goethe's drama. (34) *goldsmith by trade*, calling of Fust's brother, Jacob.

370: 17, *famulus*, servant.

371: 5, *bell, book, and candle*, in ceremony of greater excommunication in Catholic Church a bell is rung, a book closed, and a candle extinguished. (21) *Heureka*, Eureka, I have found it out, exclamation of Archimedes when he found how to test gold in Hiero's crown.

372: 3, *Ne pulvis*, words from a monkish exorcism, that is half forgotten. (7) *Asmodeus*, evil spirit mentioned in *Tobit; Hussite*, follower of John Huss, reformer of Bohemia.

375: 7, *Myk*, imaginary person.

376: 16, "*Cur*" *miss a* "*quare?*" "a rather complicated pun, suggesting the image of a hunting dog missing the quarry, that is, the game, and also the idea of their question, 'Why is this?' missing a larger question, 'cur' being a contrasted form of 'quare,' meaning 'wherefore.' The friends are to have a larger question answered than they ask." — Editors of *Poet-Lore*.

380: 3, *rectius si quid novistis impertite*, if you have known anything better, impart it. See Horace, *Epodes*, i. 6, 68.

381: 15, *Semper sint res uti sunt*, As things are, so may they always be.

382: 15, *Beghards*, German mystics preceding Reformation; *Waldenses*, French mystics preceding Reformation. (16) *Jeronimites*, hermits of Middle Ages.

383: 3, *An cuique credendum sit*, whether every one must have his belief; *ans*, here "an," which means question, is used with English plural for questions or doubts, also signifies goose, *anser* being the ornithological name.

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385. Asolando: Prologue. (5) *iris-bow*, rainbow. (13) *chrysopras*, quartz of greenish-gray color; but the poet has in mind various stones as forming the series of primary colors.

386: 6, *Asolo*, about thirty miles from Venice, visited by Browning in early manhood, scene of *Pippa Passes*, again visited by him in his later years, and place of his death. (12) *Bush*, Exodus iii. 2.

386. Rosny. This is the name of a chateau on the river Loire, below Mantes in western France. It gave name to Maximilian de Bethune, Duke of Sully, because of his birth in the chateau. Sully or Rosny was severely wounded at battle of Ivry, in the immediate neighborhood, and was carried here on a litter. If the poem refers to Sully is not certain, and the editors of *Poet-Lore* say that the refrain of "Clara, Clara," is "the speaker's grief-stricken address to herself, showing the conflict between her love and ambition, and the realization that, if her lover falls, it will be because her ideal of heroism has driven him to his fate.

389. Summum Bonum. This term was first used by Xenophanes to mean a contented acquiescence in the decrees of the gods. The Stoics defined it as the supreme good; this Epicurus found in peace of mind, but Browning finds it in love.

390. White Witchcraft. Helpful magic is so designated, that which is celestial in origin. It was applied to the arts of good men and women, and to use of hallowed herbs and salves. (2) *play Jove* refers to his transformations in the course of his various amours. (3) *stealer of the grapes* refers to fable of Æsop, also to Song of Solomon ii. 15. (7) *Canidia*, name of witch in Horace, *Epodes*, v. and xvii. (8) *pearl beneath puckered brow;* Gubernatis, in his *Zoölogical Mythology*, says: "Out of the toad, the dark animal of the night, the gloom or winter, the solar pearl comes; thus popular German stories regard the *Schild-kröte*, or toad with the shield, as sacred, on account of the pearl supposed to be contained in its head." (9) *eyes that follow mine;* this refers to experience in early manhood, described by Mrs. Orr, who says that "in the garden, the poet soon had another though humbler friend in the person of a toad, which became so much attached to him that it would follow him as he walked. He visited it daily, where it burrowed under a white rose-tree, announcing himself by a pinch of gravel dropped into its hole; and the creature would crawl out, allow its head to be gently tickled, and reward the act with a loving glance of the soft full eyes."

397. The Cardinal and the Dog. This poem was written for the son of William Macready, at the same time with *The Pied Piper*. The *Crescenzio* mentioned was Marcel Crescentio, an Italian bishop, who was appointed by the Pope to preside at the Council of Trent. Browning gives the date wrong, for the fifteenth cession closed in 1552. The bishop was ill, remained in Trent, and, as he was writing his report to the Pope late at night, imagined he saw a dog that opened its jaws frightfully, appeared to have flaming eyes and low-hanging ears as if mad. The bishop called his servants, but no dog was found. He was attacked with melancholia, and not long after died.

398. The Pope and the Net. Probably the Pope was Sixtus V., who was very humble, but rose from the lowest position, step by

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step, until he gained the summit of his ambition. When elected, he threw away his staff and appeared taller than before. When a friend spoke of the change that had taken place in his appearance, he replied: "I was then looking for the keys of Paradise, which obliged me to stoop a little; but, now I have found them, it is time to look upwards, as I am arrived at the summit of all human glory, and can climb no higher in this world."

399. THE BEAN-FEAST. Probably this poem refers to Felix Peretti, who became Sixtus V. in 1585. The anecdote Browning uses may have been recorded of this Pope, but the following is authentic:—

"Another time, as he passed through the city, seeing the gates of that convent open, he suddenly got out of his chariot, and went into the porter's lodge, where he found the porter, who was a lay brother, eating a platter of beans with oil poured over them. As the meanness of the repast put him in mind of his former condition, he took a wooden spoon, and sitting down close to the porter, on a stair-case, first eat one platter full with him, and then another, to the great surprise of those that were with him. After that he had thanked the lay brother for his entertainment, he turned to his attendants and said: 'We shall live two years longer for this; for we have eat with an appetite, and without fear or suspicion.' And then, lifting up his eyes to heaven, said, 'The Lord be praised for permitting a Pope, once in his life, to make a meal in peace and quietness.'"

400. MUCKLE-MOUTH MEG. Describes an actual incident of border warfare, when William Scott, of the Harden family, fell into hands of Sir Gideon Murray of Elibank, who dealt with him as the poem describes. The marriage proved a happy one. Sir Walter Scott was a descendant, and at Abbotsford hung a sketch, by Sharpe, describing humorously the incident. *Muckle* and *mickle* mean much, large.

401. ARCADES AMBO. This phrase means Arcadians both, from Virgil's seventh pastoral; and is used ironically to describe vivisection, which Browning strongly opposed.

403. PONTE DELL' ANGELO, VENICE. (23) *ad rem*, to the point.

404:14, *Capucins*, friars of reformed order of St. Francis, named from *capuce* or hood they wore.

407:31, *Boverio*, wrote *Annals* of his order and other works, 1568–1638.

408. BEATRICE SIGNORINI. (2) *Viterbo*, northwest of Rome, in Campagna. (4) *Cortona*, real name Pietro Berretini, 1596–1669, called Pietro da Cortona, painter and architect. (12) *Francesco Romanelli*, 1617–1662, painter of Cortona school, and afterward a follower of Bernini, patronized by Cardinal Barberini and Louis XIV. He married Beatrice Signorini, a noble lady; but soon after he was called to Paris by Louis XIV. He was not a great painter, and was much opposed to the use of the nude, an attitude Browning combats. (13) *a wonder of a woman*, Artemisia Genteleschi, 1590–1642, who became very skilful in painting fruits. She was not only beautiful, but she was a gifted painter, and her paintings were highly esteemed. Of her *Judith and Holofernes* Lanzi said, it is "of a tone and perspicuity that inspires awe."

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410:23, *acromion*, outer extremity of shoulder-blade. (31) *Ser Santi*, Santi di Titi or Tito, 1538–1603, Tuscan painter, nicknamed *Titian*, being a genius in drawing and perspective as Titian was in color.

411:26, *you paint the human figure;* preference is given to Artemisia by the poet, because she paints the nude, to which Romanelli is opposed. (28) *flowers;* Baldinucci says, "Besides portrait painting, Artemisia had great talent for reproducing every kind of fruit, imitating nature in a marvellous fashion." For some reason the poet substitutes flowers for fruits.

413:30, *Calypso*, reference to *Odyssey*, xxiii. 405, where Ulysses tells Penelope of his detention by Calypso.

415:4, *spilla*, large pin for hair.

416:8, *pretty incident*, described by Baldinucci, who says that Romanelli "became deeply attached to the painter Artemisia, and often visited her in order to watch her working at her art, and to converse with her about art and the topics of the day. Romanelli wished to paint her portrait. As she was at the height of her art in fruit-painting at that time, he desired her to paint a picture filled with fruit, and to leave in the centre space enough for the portrait. Artemisia complied with this request, and made a charming picture embellished by fruits. Romanelli placed in the centre a most life-like and lovely portrait of Artemisia. This picture he kept himself, and he placed more value on it than on all the presents he had received from prelates and princes while in Rome. It was accordingly hung in his own house among his other pictures. One day he called his wife's attention to it, pointed out the portrait of Artemisia, and remarked upon the beauty and the ingenuity displayed in the conception of the picture. He purposely praised all the virtues of Artemisia, her charming manner, her vivacity of speech, and her lively repartee. This he did in order to excite the jealousy of his wife, who was also a very beautiful woman. The latter took occasion, when her husband was out of the house, to pierce and entirely destroy the face of Artemisia with a large pin (spillo), so that it could not be recognized. Romanelli, instead of showing anger at this proceeding, was more in love with his wife than ever, and from that time ceased to praise or make mention of the picture, which still is in possession of some of Romanelli's heirs."

416. FLUTE-MUSIC, WITH AN ACCOMPANIMENT. (8) *secretes*, used as verb.

417:31, *Quid petis?* What do you seek?

418:8, *legato*, sustained tone. (10) *staccato*, detached tone. (30) *Gounod*, Charles Gounod, 1818–1895, musical composer.

419:16, *caldamente*, with warmth. (19) *syncopation*, notes struck against the beat, regularly breaking the rhythm.

420. "IMPERANTE AUGUSTO NATUS EST—." These words mean, He was born in the reign of Augustus, or Augustus reigning, and refer to Christ.

421:4, *Lucius Varius Rufus*, an epic poet, 64 B. C.–9 A. D., whose work is lost except two lines of Panegyric on Augustus, quoted by Horace in his first *Epistle*. (6) *the Emperor*, Caius Octavius, nephew of Julius Cæsar, whom he succeeded. He was carefully taught by

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his mother Atia, and was studying in Greece when the death of Cæsar brought him to Rome, and he became triumvir with Antony and Lepidus. After the battle of Actium he became Emperor. He was a great ruler, gave peace to Rome, built great public works, and was a man of intellectual tastes. (7) *little Flaccus*, Horatius Flaccus, or Horace, 65 B. C.–8 A. D., one of the chief Latin poets. (8) *Epos*, heroic poem. (11) *Etruscan kings*, those of Etruria, a race in central Italy preceding the *Latins*. (12) *Mœcenas*, very rich man of Rome, who patronized Horace and other literary men, and was influential in political life. (13) *quadrans*, Roman coin of value of half cent.

422:21, *earth-upholding Mount*, that of Mount Atlas in North Africa, where fable said Atlas held earth on his shoulders.

423:11, *Suburra*, street of ill-fame in Rome. (16) *Quæstor*, subordinate political office; *Ædile*, magistrate; *Censor*, supervisor of morals; *Pol*, oath. (20) *quarter-as*, quarter of an *as*, which was worth less than a cent.

424:16, *ancient dismal tales*, those of the early Greek mythology. (19) *Sibyl;* in his *Lexicon* Suidas describes a visit which Augustus made to the oracle of Apollo at Delphos. "Augustus, having sacrificed, asked Pythia who should reign after him, and the oracle answered: —

> "'A Hebrew slave, holding control over the blessed gods,
> Orders me to leave this house, and return to the underworld.
> Depart in silence, therefore, from our altars.'"

Various other Sibyls were attributed with this prediction of the coming of one who would rule the world. Virgil refers to this tradition in his fourth pastoral. Nicephorus relates that, when Augustus returned to Rome after receiving this prophecy, he erected an altar in the Capitol with the inscription, "Ara Primogeniti Dei." (25) *strigils*, flesh-brushes; *oil-drippers*, for anointing with oil.

424. DEVELOPMENT. This poem is autobiographical, giving an account of the manner in which Browning was taught by his father. Mr. Sharp says: "He was a scholar in a reputable fashion, not indifferent to what he had learnt in his youth, nor heedless of the high opinion generally entertained for the greatest writers of antiquity, but with a particular care himself for Horace and Anacreon." To Mrs. Corson, a week or two before his death, Browning said: "It would have been quite unpardonable in my case not to have done my best. My dear father put me in a condition most favorable for the best work I was capable of. He secured for me all the love and comfort that a literary man needs to do good work. It would have been shameful if I had not done my best to realize his expectations of me." Mrs. Orr says of Browning's school days: "It was one of his amusements at school to organize Homeric combats among the boys, in which the fighting was carried on in the manner of the Greeks and Trojans, and he and his friend Kenyon would arm themselves with swords and shields, and hack at each other lustily, exciting themselves to battle by insulting speeches derived from the Homeric text."

425:25, *Pope;* Browning seems to have read Pope's *Iliad* when a

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boy. (27) *Primer*, first book in Greek. (30) *Buttman; Greek Grammar* of Philip Karl Buttman, 1764–1829, a distinguished German philologist. (33) *Heine*, or Heyne, who edited the standard Greek text of Homer.

426: 3, *Hymns;* the so-called *Homeric Hymns*, of later date than Homer, though giving myths of much earlier date, especially those of Apollo, Demeter, and Hermes. (4) *Battle of the Frogs and Mice*, a comic poem attributed to Homer, satire on epic poems. (5) *Margites*, comic poem of early Greek period. (12) *Prolegomena*, the *Prolegomena in Homerum* of Friedrich August Wolf, 1759–1824, in which he attempted to prove the composite character of the Homeric poems, that they originally consisted of ballads, afterwards wrought together to make the epics as we have them.

427: 1, *loath, like Peleus' son, a lie, Iliad*, i., where Peleus' son resented failure of Achilles to fulfil an agreement. (2) *love my wedded wife, like Hector, Iliad*, vi., farewell of Hector to his wife. (7) *Ethics*, that of Aristotle. (14) *Stagirite*, Aristotle, so called from Stagiros, the place of his birth.

427. Rephan. This poem was suggested by a prose story called *How it Strikes a Stranger*, contained in Jane Taylor's *The Contributions of Q. Q.* It describes the coming of an inhabitant of another planet to this earth and his impressions of its people and institutions, especially his feelings upon first becoming acquainted with the fact of death. Jane Taylor, of Onger (not Norwich), was a prolific writer for children and on religious themes, who died in 1824, at the age of forty.

437. Sonnet. This early poem was contributed to *The Monthly Repository*, edited by W. J. Fox. Four other poems, contributed to the same periodical, Browning included in his works, but this poem he omitted.

437. Ben Karshook's Wisdom. This poem was written at Rome, in April, 1854, and it was printed in an annual called *The Keepsake*, edited by Miss Power, 1856. It would appear that Browning intended to include it in *Men and Women;* for in *One Word More*, lines 135, 136, he said: —

> "I am mine and yours — the rest be all men's,
> Karshook, Cleon, Norbert, and the fifty."

In the *Tauchnitz* edition of 1872 this defect was remedied by changing "Karshook" in this place to "Karshish," the latter being the name of the narrator of one of the longer poems in the volume. In Hebrew "Karshook" means thistle.

438. Helen's Tower. At the request of the Earl of Dufferin and Clandeboye, Browning wrote this poem. When the Earl reached the age of twenty-one he erected on a rock situated on his estate at Clandeboye, Ireland, a tower in memory of his mother, Helen, Countess of Giffard. Tennyson wrote a poem for the same occasion.

438. O Love! Love! This is a translation of a lyric in the *Hippolytus* of Euripides, and it was made by Browning, at the request of Prof. J. P. Mahaffy, for his little book on *Euripides*, published in the series of *Classical Writers*, edited by John Richard Green, 1879. Prof. Mahaffy prefaced it with these words: "Mr. Browning has

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honored me (Dec. 18, 1878) with the following translation of these stanzas, so that the general reader may not miss the meaning or the spirit of the ode. The English metre, though not a strict reproduction, gives an excellent idea of the original."

439. The Blind Man to the Maiden. In Mrs. Clara Bell's translation of Wilhelmine von Hillern's *The Hour Will Come*, this little poem was rendered into English verse by Browning. A note said it was contributed by a friend; and, in answer to an inquiry, Browning wrote: "I did indeed translate that little song for Mrs. Bell, never dreaming anybody would suppose there was 'another hand' in her book. See now! I should have thought it very mean had I told anybody 'That 's mine,' and she herself unnecessarily tells it, — from sheer honesty, I have no doubt, on somebody observing, 'What, you versify?'"

440. Album Lines. To the album of Miss Edith Longfellow, afterward Mrs. R. H. Dana, Browning contributed these lines in explanation of the Epilogue to his *Dramatic Lyrics*. They were first printed in *The Century* of November, 1882, in aid of a charity, with the consent of the author.

440. Impromptu. One day the painter Felix Moscheles said to Browning, in speaking of the susceptibilities of musical artists, that Horace had finely described them in the lines: —

> "Omnibus hoc vitium est cantoribus, inter amicos
> Ut nunquam inducant animum cantare rogati;
> Injussi, nunquam desistant."

He said that he meant to have the lines put on his piano, and asked Browning if he knew a good translation, whereupon the poet gave him this version impromptu.

440. Goldoni. Goldoni was the father of modern Italian comedy, 1707–1793. He was a Venetian by birth, and wrote largely in the dialect of that city. A monument to his memory was erected in Venice during the year 1883. The committee in charge asked Browning to write for its *Album* a stanza, which so pleased its members that they gave it the first place.

441. Rawdon Brown. Mr. Rawdon Brown was an Englishman who went to Venice on some temporary errand, and lived there for forty years, dying in that city in the summer of 1883. He had an enthusiastic love for Venice, and is mentioned in books of travel as one who knew the city thoroughly. His love was described in a sonnet written by Browning at the request of Mrs. Brownson, who published it in *The Century* for February, 1884, with Browning's permission. The Venetian saying means that "everybody follows his taste and I follow mine." Toni was the gondolier and attendant of Brown. The inscription on Brown's tomb is given in the third and fourth lines.

441. The Names. At Dr. F. J. Furnivall's suggestion, Browning was asked to contribute a sonnet to the *Shakesperean Show-Book* of the "Shakesperean Show," held in Albert Hall, London, on May 29–31, 1884, to pay off the debt on the Hospital for Women, in Fulham Road. It had the first place in the book.

441. The Founder of the Feast. A series of popular concerts

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were held in London, at St. James' Hall, on Saturdays and Mondays. They were managed by Mr. Arthur Chappell; and when the patrons presented him with an album, Browning wrote in it a poem addressed "To Arthur Chappell."

442. WHY I AM A LIBERAL. When Andrew Reid edited for Cassell & Co., London, in 1885, a volume in which a number of leaders of English men of thought answered this question, Browning furnished this poetic contribution, at the request of the editor.

442. LEVI LINCOLN THAXTER. Mrs. Celia Thaxter wrote of her husband's admiration for Browning's poetry: "Mr. Thaxter's great admiration of Browning's genius developed in early youth, and he was already a devoted student of his poetry long before Browning's name had become familiar in this country. His enthusiasm was something beautiful, and it grew and strengthened with every year of his life. To his clear mind the poet's meaning was always perfectly intelligible, and he had the power of making others understand without an effort the subtleties of the master's most mystic utterances." Mrs. Thaxter wrote to Browning of her husband's admiration of his work: "He has for you and all your work an enthusiastic appreciation, such as is seldom found on this planet; it is not possible that the admiration of one mortal for another can exceed his feeling for you. . . . You should see his fine wrath and scorn for the idiocy that does n't at once comprehend you!" Thaxter gave readings from Browning in Boston, which were regarded as quite remarkable in the way of subtle interpretation. A boulder on the Maine seacoast marks his grave, and for this monument Browning wrote this epitaph at the request of Thaxter's son.

443. JUBILEE MEMORIAL LINES. The parishioners of St. Margaret's Church, on the occasion of the Jubilee anniversary, put into the church a window representing Queen Victoria at full length, bearing an orb and sceptre, in the central panel, with smaller ones devoted to her coronation and the arms of the Colonies of England. These lines also found a place on the window, being written at the request of the parishioners.

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